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06/23/2010: "LETTERS ON ERICKSON BUILDING PURCHASE"

Concerns About Use Of Land Bank Funds
Dear Editor,

The recent 3 yes votes by our County Council, on the approval of spending Land Bank funds to develop a Farmers Market site on Nichols Street, is very troubling. These three Council members' willingness to vote yes on an issue without answering or investigating the concerns voiced about this project, or in considering the legal consequences, should be embarrassing to these Council members. It was clear that approval of this purchase would have triggered a lawsuit and an ethics complaint being filed against Council member Lovel Pratt, whether she voted or not on the project.

It appears that these Council members were influenced by individuals who had a financial stake in the project, or by friends of those who had a financial stake in the project. Our citizens need to give special thanks to Council members Richard Fralick and Richard Peterson for their research of the concerns. In fact, Richard Peterson went the full distance by contacting and talking to business owners all along Nichols Street. There were many reasons the Town of Friday Harbor had bowed out of this project due to "hair raising" possible consequences, and there are many reasons our County should not be involved as well.

The problem is not just the fault of the Council. Individuals working for the County are inappropriately pushing pet projects or projects for friends. For example, the manner in which Stan Mathews wrote his one sided "news" column for the County website, or consider the comments of the Land Bank representative, Lincoln Bormann, at the Farmers Market group/Ag Group special meeting on August 29th. Lincoln Bormann told these members, Don't worry, the Land Bank is not going away and it will be there in the future to support the Brickworks Project.... It was also inappropriate that at this 501 (3) c meeting members stated they just had to develop more "raw political power", and then they introduced a person running for the County Council. This is bullying tactics designed to get your way by whom you know or control. Decisions about community projects paid for by the taxpayers need to be based on merit and costs. These projects should also move forward in an open public process. Why was it that the full Council never knew about, or had a voice in where Senator Kevin Ranker's State funds were to be used?

This Council vote relates directly to our Draft Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) concerns because the CAO issues are very complex and have clear case law about many of the concerns citizens are voicing. When Council members choose to vote on something without investigating all aspects and ramifications of various proposals, they end up passing poorly thought out legislation and they place the County in legal jeopardy. One of the best ways to become educated is to answer the questions asked by citizens, rather than just accept what staff or lobbyists sell and tell to them. We do not need waste in government. We need legislators who

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are looking after our interests. These three Council members need to reflect on the manner in which they made their recent vote, and they need to answer the questions and concerns that have been brought to their attention regarding the Draft CAO, before they bolt toward a vote which has been drafted and based on misinformation and the desires of special interests who have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to influence our County legislation. Citizens deserve answers to basic questions that we keep asking, "Show us what the problem is?" One cannot properly address a problem, if one does not thoroughly identify the problems and search for a variety of ways to mitigate the identified problems.

Sincerely,
Frank M Penwell,
President CAPR San Juan

Open Letter To Ms. Stokes

Please forgive me for being somewhat amused by another's distress but when Ms. Stokes expressed how "absolutely aghast" [See 2nd Let below] she is regarding the recent "lack of respect and civility" with which we Islanders have been behaving of late, I could only wonder, did she just get here yesterday? What kind of bubble does she live in?

We Islanders have always been contentious. That is why we have two forts on the Island. We will even argue to the death about whether one of them is called "English Camp" (which is correct) or "British Camp" (which is wrong).

Perhaps what Ms. Stokes really meant was that when those in positions of power make decisions that many of us disagree with, those decisions should be quietly accepted as coming from the wisdom of our betters. That is not likely to happen here.

Peggy Sue McRae
Friday Harbor

Open Letter To Larry Greene
Dear Larry:

From your letter [3rd letter below -Ed] it seems like you are a good person who is sincere and passionate about a permanent home for the farmer's market. I appreciate the tone of your letter and your willingness to listen and try to work out solutions. Some promoters of this market have a different attitude.

Personally, I have never seen anything in all my years in these islands as ugly as what I have seen in people since the fair. I've lost sleep over it. I wish people were not so angry and unreasonable. I am still not over this and my feelings are somewhat raw. I want it to stop.

After reading your letter this afternoon I tried to list the issues that advocates of the Nichols St. project should rethink with an open mind. This is my perspective and opinion only. I have tried to make some of these points before but to no avail.

Supporters of this project have a dream. It is not reality. It is a dream. In an ideal world perhaps the dream could come true but from my experience it needs to be tempered with reality.

After reading the list below, I hope you can understand how someone who is opposed to the project "sees" those involved on the other side. This is how I see it. Remember, I am still angry about the personal attacks and it probably shows. I hope this can be useful moving forward. If not, at least I can say I tried to use reason and it failed.
Here are some starting points.

1. Stop the deception.

The attempt to take over the SJ Grange to locate the Farmer's Market at Car Quest was a deception that did lasting damage to that institution and our community. Next it is the Erickson property. Let's be honest. This is not a tourist





community... facility entitled to lodging tax money. It is a stretch to call this an important historical site entitled to Land Bank funding. These things were ginned up to get free money from the public treasury to build a facility that has no chance to function into the future without continual subsidies. Let's have an honest debate.

2. Lose the "entitlement" mentality.

Farming is good for our community but that does not entitle farmers to demand that a facility be built on their behalf with public money. Many people work hard and do important things for the community. If farmers are dissatisfied with the money they earn from their operations they should look for solutions that reduce costs and improve profits. Expensive new facilities with high operating costs are not the answer. Demanding that taxpayers should provide anyone with gifts from the public treasury is not the answer. Be prepared to take a financial risk with your own money. Everyone else in business does this. Why should your business be any different?

3. Consider the Fairgrounds seriously.

The T-shirt (that was printed up to hurt someone personally) had a good message. Does anyone really think that a hardware store would not improve its business with better access for customers? Two of the most successful businesses on SJ are located even further out of town than the fairgrounds. Market Place and Browne's Lumber thrive because of one important reason: Access! That is just one obvious reason (out of many) to use the fairgrounds. Access and low overhead can reduce the cost of your products and increase sales. Think about it.

4. Be honest about the economic feasibility and construction costs of a Market.

This expensive project is not economically feasible now or in the long term. Costs to bring this facility up to code are grossly underestimated. Proponents point to Markets in Bellingham and Olympia as successful models. These markets have one thing Friday Harbor does not- a large population that can sustain a viable customer base. Still these Markets are only open Wednesday and Saturday's. There is not enough inventory to supply a market here for more than a few hours a week. The business plan submitted to the public was weak and speculative. No one wants to see a failed and bankrupt project in our town.

5. Consider your customers.

Does anyone think that customers want to be embroiled in your political battles when they come to buy local farm goods? Every week it is another petition in their face or some partisan cause to support. The potential customers that may have been alienated by this recent spectacle could be huge. Some loyal customers were banned from the market for writing letters to the editor that disagreed with the Nichols St. location! Your market may never recover the lost sales from this. Be considerate of the people who want to support you or you will fail altogether.

6. Farmers should distance themselves from the Ag Guild.

The Ag Guild has become a political and divisive entity. They have done nothing except cause distrust. Farmers should divorce them.

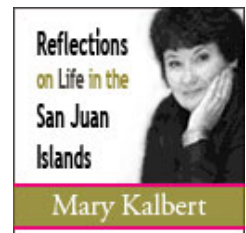
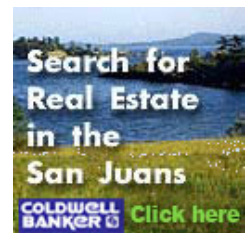
Thanks for listening,
Gordy Petersen
San Juan Island

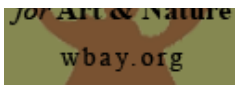
Ill-spirited and downright nasty things
To the Editor:

I am absolutely aghast at the total lack of respect and civility I have recently witnessed among some of our islanders. It has always been one of our strengths as a community that the people living here really care about this very special place.

Many of us have strong opinions, but I have always felt that as a whole, our community values differing viewpoints, knowing that we all care deeply about our island home and simply disagree on the best way to sustain and protect it.

The discussions about both the farmers' market and the National Park Service's plan to save an endangered prairie by getting rid of the bunnies there have each





plan to save an endangered prairie by getting rid of the burnings there have each been characterized by a viciousness that makes me wonder what is happening to the spirit of mutual respect and compassion that has always been at the heart of our island way of life.

I am deeply saddened by the ill-spirited and downright nasty things that have been said. Attacking or ridiculing our neighbors just because they don't share our own point of view is simply shameful.

Lori Stokes
Friday Harbor

open letter to the San Juan County Council and our island community

By Larry Greene

On August 24th in the San Juan County Council hearing room, the dynamite was lit and the explosion many feared took place.

While the goal of the initiative at the center of this crisis is the creation of a permanent farmers' market at the Nichols Street Brickworks location on San Juan Island, there is a much broader question for all to ponder: what kind of leadership and democratic governance should we expect and work towards in San Juan County and how do we realize our goal?

Many present at the hearing on the easement purchase of the Erickson property felt the process fell far short of the kind of democratic governance we desire.

The sad irony is that almost everyone embroiled in this controversy wants a permanent farmers market. But, instead of working together, with respect for one another, to achieve consensus on the action to be taken, people dug themselves into combative, rigid positions, demonizing the other side and engaging in verbal warfare. Unfortunately, some people who had concerns about the Nichols Street site were so intimidated by hostility and threatening, name-calling language, that they chose not to attend the hearing. Quite possibly there was antagonism going both ways.

To clearly state my position: I am 100% in favor of a permanent farmers' market. I believe it will help our farmers profitably grow and sell more produce, grow our local economy, become a centerpiece tourist attraction, generate more business for other island businesses and improve our quality of life. Finally, I believe this is a critically important food security issue for us.

To successfully get through this, we need to re-establish respectful dialog, deliberation and consensus building in our community. We need everyone at the table using creative problem solving skills to develop the best solutions. We're islanders. We can do this.

Let's learn from this experience and get back on the right track when it comes to realizing the vision of a permanent farmers market in our community. Let's repair the damage that has been done to our entire community. Let's establish a process that enables us to avoid this kind of breakdown when we face difficult decisions in the future.

Specifically I would like to address Councilman Fralick's question to Senator Ranker when he asked him what he would do differently from a process perspective.

For starters, County Council members can become more adaptive in leading the community through situations like this. And, this responsibility goes beyond the County Council to include groups like the Ag Guild. Taking it further, at the core of a truly participatory democratic society, we, as citizens, must be responsible for creating an environment that respects and encourages everyone's right to participate in a civil, democratic process. We all could have handled this situation more effectively from the beginning.

Our Council members were voted into power under the guise of the charter



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Our Council members were voted into power under the aegis of the charter government. When it was conceived, one of the expressed goals was to develop better ways to empower and engage citizens in the process of governance. That goal has somehow been lost.

It is incumbent upon all of us to work to create a better democratic process in San Juan County. If the process broke down around an initiative that almost everyone supports, we need to repair it in order to avoid the same contentious result in the future.

Regarding the permanent farmers' market initiative, there are those in our community who challenged or found fault with the proponents' decisions, process and work. Let's pull back from the brink, recognize that mistakes were probably made on all sides and move forward in a way that nurtures the healthy growth of our community. Let's create a safe environment where citizens, especially those who may have doubts or concerns about a plan or initiative, are encouraged to openly (and without fear of retribution) share their concerns and work to design the best solution. Let's use our time and resources to build a stronger community, instead of tearing it asunder.

If we wish to avoid further escalation of this donnybrook, we have the power to change this. Let's write this new chapter in our community's book beginning with an initiative that most of us support.

I implore everyone who is in favor of a permanent farmers' market to come together now, despite our differences, and resolve our conflict amicably, responsibly and respectfully. Let's enter into constructive conversation about our options and opportunities and come to consensus about how and where we establish the market in our community. It is urgently important for us to do this as soon as possible. Let's not allow this problem to fester. We don't want to lose any opportunities available to us. Let's have the confidence that we can do this.

To accomplish this we may need a top-notch professional conflict resolution specialist to guide us through this work. Our community has the financial wear-with-all to do this. It may be our least expensive, most expedient and best option to successfully and peacefully resolve this matter. The alternatives can become very painful and expensive. Let's channel our passionate feelings, brains and creativity to get this good work done.

Once we are through this one, we may have experienced new awareness of who we are and the assets we possess. We also will have also honed new skills to more effectively respond to future conflicts and manage our own self-governance processes.

Let's work to improve our island community. Our time, energy and financial resources will be well spent with benefits we never dreamed of resulting from our efforts

Larry Greene
San Juan Island

Open Letter To Council

To the County Council:

I am writing to urge the County Council to decline to approve the Land Bank's proposed conservation easement for the 150 Nichols Street property, now set for consideration on August 24, 2010.

I believe that the Council is obligated to reject the proposed easement for the reasons set forth below.

I. COUNTY COUNCIL HAS AN AFFIRMATIVE DUTY TO CONSIDER THE CONTEXT AND LANGUAGE OF THE PROPOSED EASEMENT BEFORE CONSIDERING THE RESOLUTION ACCEPTING IT.

A. The Council Has Authority To Accept or Decline A Real Property Interest.

There is no question that the ultimate decision whether to accept a proposed property interest falls within the Council's authority. SJCC 2.28.010. The Code requires that a property interest may be effectively transferred to the County only after a Council resolution accepting it. There is nothing in the statute to suggest that this obligation is ministerial, or a mere "formality."

B. Nothing In the Land Bank Enabling Ordinance Precludes Review By The Council of This Proposed Easement.

1. The Council Has Not Yet "Approved" This Easement.

Public Record Act requests and review of Council minutes have to date produced no evidence that the Nichols Street project was ever even discussed by Council, much less approved. In any event, the easement being considered by the Council was not drafted and circulated in its current form **until Tuesday, August 17, 2010**. Therefore, it is obvious that Council has not yet "approved" it.

2. The Council Has Not Yet "Approved" This Transaction.

The Council reportedly approved the Land Bank Annual Acquisition and Expenditure Plan (2008 Amended Plan II) on September 9, 2009, as part of the Budget Ordinance amending the San Juan County's 2008 Budget for Supplemental and Transfers, and an Ordinance Amending San Juan County's 2008 Budget for Emergencies. The 2008 Plan included as line items \$615,000 for the **joint purchase by the Land Bank and the Town of Friday Harbor** of the "Erickson property" at 150 Nichols Street. The Project Proposal in the Plan identified the proposed project as an acquisition of fee title with resale provision. The Conservation Value of the Property section referred to the Agricultural Guild's not-yet completed feasibility study regarding the adequacy of the building and the site for farmers' market needs, and confirmed the partnership of the Town of Friday Harbor and the Agricultural Guild.

The Council reportedly approved the Land Bank Annual Acquisition and Expenditure Plan (2009) with the Nichols Street project unchanged on August 11, 2009.

The Council reportedly approved the Land Bank Annual Acquisition and Expenditure Plan (2010) on March 30, 2010. The only records produced regarding this Plan show a change in the amount allocated to the Nichols Street project to \$415,000. We have received no documentation of any information provided to Council concerning the structure or financing of the revised arrangements, even as they stood in March 2010.

For consideration tomorrow is yet another plan. None of the details of the financing have yet been made public, and the proposed resolution contains numerous factual errors, discussed below.

In summary, even as of this late date, the only action taken by Council was to approve a proposed expenditure for the joint acquisition by the Town of Friday Harbor and the Agricultural Guild of the Nichols Street property, followed by a line item amount reduction from \$615,000 to \$415,000. What is on the agenda for consideration tomorrow is something very different than what the Council already "approved."

The opinions issued by the office of the Prosecuting Attorney dated June 4, 2010, and August 3, 2010, do not affect this conclusion. The former opinion asked the question: "Can the county council use its authority under SJCC 2.28 to individually reject purchases by the Land Bank that have been previously approved by the council as part of an annual acquisition and expenditure plan?" The latter asked the question: "What discretionary role does the County Council have in the final approval of a conservation easement that has previously been approved by the Council as part of the Land Bank's budget?"

Both of these opinions assume that the Council previously approved the transaction as part of the annual budget process. This is not the case. In fact, even at this late hour, the Council does not know exactly what it is being asked to

approve.

The Council is not exercising its “discretion” in reviewing the proposed easement. It is exercising its obligations pursuant to the County Charter. For a number of reasons set forth below, it should reject the proposed easement.

3. Even Assuming That The Proponents Can Establish That The Council “Approved” The Project In Something Approximating Its Present Form, Such Approval Is Void Due To Violation of the Code of Ethics, RCW 42.23.030.

The original project proposal -for the Town of Friday Harbor to purchase the Nichols Street property in conjunction with the Land Bank- was approved by County Council prior to Councilperson Pratt’s joining the Council.

However, to the extent that the Council is deemed to have “approved” the repeatedly- and materially-changed plans in 2009 and 2010, Councilperson Pratt voted in the approval process in violation of the Ethics Code, and the resulting purported “commitment” is void (1 Applying on behalf of the Agricultural Guild for the state capital funds made available through the offices of Senator Ranker, while designated as legislative liaison for the County, and without formally advising the Council of the opportunity for funding, would also raise additional serious questions.)

By opinion dated August 5, 2010, the Prosecuting Attorney responded to an inquiry from Councilperson Pratt regarding whether she is permitted to vote on the Resolution in question in light of her key role as principal proponent of the Nichols Street project and her paid employment as Director of the Agricultural Guild. Her role as proponent clearly continues; her paid employment reportedly ended June 30, 2010.

The Prosecuting Attorney concluded that in 2008, 2009 and most of 2010, Councilperson Pratt was the lead negotiator on behalf of the Agricultural Guild, and as such chose the side of the transaction for which she was acting. The Prosecuting Attorney further concluded that Councilperson Pratt may not vote on the resolution without violating the Ethics Code.

The analysis found in the opinion applies just as much to the purported votes of Council approval of the Nichols Street project in 2009 and 2010. Ms. Pratt voted aye in each case. To the extent that either vote is deemed to have approved the County’s commitment to a revised Nichols Street project, the commitment is void.

Moreover, any action related to the Nichols Street project taken to date by the Council with the participation of Councilmember Pratt is subject to challenge. Under the analysis in the opinion, one could conclude that Councilperson Pratt was under a duty not only to formally disclose her involvement (and that of her family members) on behalf of the Agricultural Guild in the minutes of the Council, but also to refrain from “communicat[ing] directly (by letter, e-mail, or in person) with any other Council Member in an effort to influence their vote(s)” regarding the Nichols Street project. Council would be well-advised to address whether there has been any such communication before taking up the proposed resolution.

II. THE PROPOSED RESOLUTION IS FLAWED.

The proposed resolution contained several misstatements of fact:

1. San Juan County has not yet “agreed” to purchase an historic preservation and conservation easement.
2. The Agricultural Guild does not own the property in question, and therefore the County cannot purchase an easement from it.
3. The purchase of the easement in question was not considered at County Council in 2008, 2009, or 2010. The easement in question was not finalized until last week. The project initially approved by Council was a joint undertaking that included the Town of Friday Harbor, and differs in several other material ways from the current proposal.

III. THE PROPOSED TRANSACTION SHOULD NOT BE UNDERTAKEN BY THE COUNTY.

There are many reasons why the County, like the Town of Friday Harbor, should decline to use scarce taxpayer dollars to underwrite the Nichols Street project.

Principal among these is the fact that the proposed easement would saddle the County and the Town with a historic easement requiring protection, in perpetuity, of what amounts to three partial walls of fragile cement blocks. The structural report indicates that not only will the roof, upper story and all supporting columns have to be replaced, but the "historic" cement blocks themselves will apparently have to be reinforced in order to satisfy seismic standards. Others in Friday Harbor who have sought to salvage these cement blocks have found it impossible; the blocks are fragile and collapse. Having extensive renovation done around the blocks while preserving them will be disproportionately expensive at best, and more likely impossible.

Another major problem with the project is that the "greenspace" so widely promoted is miniscule—about 5000 square feet, so far as I can calculate—and the parking provided is far less than the close to 100 spaces (40 for vendor loading and parking, up to 60 more for patrons) called for in the feasibility study. The schematics that have recently appeared are misleading in that they prominently feature parking and greenspace that are, in fact, the private property of the neighboring condominium association. There is no reason to believe that either the additional parking or greenspace shown will be available to the public.

The financial feasibility of the project—now without the Town of Friday Harbor—is of interest if the Council is to avoid saddling the community with a white elephant. The original feasibility study was seriously deficient; the one just released last week is no more successful in providing reasonable assurance that the Agricultural Guild—which has little history and no identified reserves—will be able to accomplish the ambitious renovation project and satisfy the restrictions of the various grant funds being considered. If the Agricultural Guild fails, the County will be left "holding the bag."

Contrary to what some would have the Council believe, many citizens who support agriculture, patronize the Farmers' Markets in the County, and hope for a revitalized downtown Friday Harbor, oppose this project for sound reasons—not the least of which is that state funds were somehow produced to fund part of the project during state and county budget crises of epic proportions, despite the fact that the County Council was not consulted on how it would like to spend any available state capital funds.

In response, we have seen fiercely irrational and personal attacks—"if you are against the Nichols Street project, you are trying to drive the small farmer out of business."

I believe that measured and factual responses to the concerns raised above, and by others, are required before we commit close to \$1 million in taxpayer dollars to this project. Indeed, given what is at stake, a referendum on the question seems most appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Open Letter To County Council

Commissioners:

This email is concerning the recent news that there is a possibility that the Commission might entertain a partial extraction from the properties being presented for funding by the San Juan County Land Bank Board and the further action of redirecting funds. The property being considered is the Erickson property at 150 Nichols Street in Friday Harbor. I believe this would be a serious misstep which could cause permanent damage to the ability of the Land Bank to keep the

which could cause permanent damage to the ability of the Land Bank to keep the faith of the citizens of San Juan County, making their mission of land preservation much more difficult. The County Commissioners should not be choosing acquisitions or redirecting funds which is at the sole discretion of the Land Bank Commissioners. Either accept or reject the Land Bank work; the County Commissioners are not Land Bank Commissioners and are not authorized to do project selection.

As a way of introduction, although I am no longer a resident of your county, I served from 1994 until 2001 as a Land Bank Commissioner, chairing the same for seven years in the very early years of it's existence. I am proud of the conduct of this Commission and I still watch closely the decisions made. During my years on this board the Commission always earned high marks from the public for the work done. In short, we earned the trust of land owners and the taxpayers who funded this program. One of the reasons the Commission continued to hold that trust is their method and execution of decisions made. My understanding is that from the very first bill passed by the Legislature of the State of Washington and further approved by voters of San Juan County, the stated intent was to remove politics from decisions made by the Land Bank Commissioners. Approval of budgets, acquisitions and easements were to be either accepted or rejected by the County Commissioners, but never cherry picked and/or funds redirected, regardless of petitions or political pressure by special interests groups. A cursory reading of the statue which established this fine program of land preservation makes that abundantly clear.

It would be a travesty of justice for County Commissioners to so radically change the direction of the Land Bank by altering the hard work done by their board and staff and the decisions they make. That action would cause irreparable damage resulting in the loss of faith by those who might consider doing business with the San Juan County Land Bank in future years and mitigate their mission of land and open space preservation.

Respectfully yours,
Austin

We Support Farmers Market But, Not Purchase Of Erickson Bld
Dear Editor:

My husband and I support local farmers every week. We buy fruits, vegetables, eggs, chicken and beef. Buying locally from local farmers is not just a slogan to us. It is a pleasure! In addition to attending the farmers' market every Saturday in the summer, we belong to a CSA from which we get produce, eggs and meat all year.

I am unable to support the Brickworks Project to provide a permanent Farmers' Market. I see it as a very expensive project in a precarious economic time. On August 24th the County Council will be reviewing the spending plans of the Land Bank which includes \$400,000 for the Brickworks Project. I urge the Council to vote no on the purchase of a "historical easement" on the Brickworks building.

The San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild is the non-profit organization which will own the building. Lovel Pratt, the council member for San Juan Island south, is a paid employee of the Agricultural Guild. I do not believe she should vote on the Land Bank budget for this item.

The plans are to buy an old building in decrepit condition and restore it -with the Land Bank putting up more than \$400,000 of the purchase cost, Washington State kicking in the other \$300,000 and the citizens of the islands donating the money to make the building usable as a permanent farmers' market. I have experience restoring and maintaining a "historic" building. One certainty of working on an old, decrepit building is that you are going to be surprised. And the surprise will be costly! The community is going to give more than 1 million dollars in tax money and donations to provide a building to the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild. If the Agricultural Guild has prepared an operating budget and business plan with sources of revenue and estimated expenses, I haven't been able to find the person who can show me a copy! So my expectation is that the amount of revenue under

who can show me a copy? So my expectation is that the amount of revenue under the "donations" line -that means you and me---is substantial!

We already have a farmers' market in downtown Friday Harbor. In the parking lot of the Court House!! On Saturdays during the growing season. Which brings me to parking. When I go to the market on Saturday morning, it is hard to find a parking place. I look on Blair Street, Second Street, the Courthouse lot, Court Street and First Street behind the Courthouse. The Brickworks building is on Nichols Street. Where are all the customers for the market going to park? There has been discussion of making Web and Nichols one way so there can be angled parking on both sides of Web and Nichols. That doesn't begin to handle all the cars I see parking for the market on Saturday.

The public has not been able to vote on this issue. Our representatives on the Council are the ones who have a chance to say NO. I urge them to do so.

Liz Keeshan
Friday Harbor

It Is Also About Open Space
Dear Editor:

I want to express my support of the Brickworks Project.

This is not just about a Permanent Farmers' Market-it is about the creation of a beautiful open space in the heart of Friday Harbor for both locals and off island visitors to enjoy. This would be different from Sunken Park which is used already by several of our local youth and young families. It would be a more expanded place for local entertainment, for public and private gatherings, and, of course, an enclosed place for our farmers and artisans to sell their wares year round.

Being in the heart of town is what makes this project so appealing. Surrounding businesses would benefit from people gathering or shopping here. Visitors arriving by ferry would have easy access to the grounds and to the Market. And, the current eyesore that this space is would be so improved and available to all of us.

I do not see parking as a big enough issue to stop this project. We are already challenged by parking in town, especially in the summer months. Many of us are parking on the periphery of town in order to walk more for our own health. All of us who shop off island, often park and walk to get to shopping mall stores, and other large warehouse destinations. We can park and walk to the Brickworks.

The preservation of this space and of the historic brick works building would be an asset to Friday Harbor and to our island communities.

I urge our County Council to vote in support of this project. And, I urge all voters to encourage your council representative to support this project.

Lenore L. Bayuk
Friday Harbor

Questions On Spending \$1M Is Petty Bickering??
Dear Editor:

It was surprised to see that Mrs. Sturdivant considers concerns about the proposal to spend close to \$1 million in taxpayers' money (including \$400,000 in Land Bank funds intended for open space) on the ill-conceived Nichols street project to be nothing but "petty bickering." (See "Stop The Petty Bickering & Buy The Property" letter below -Ed)

I consider them to be serious legal and policy issues. If taxpayers are being asked to finance this venture, they should have a say in it. At the very least, perhaps we could have the property appraised? Of course, the "a million here, a million there. . . it's just taxpayer money" attitude gave us the County's ill-fated Beaverton Valley land purchase, as well as the Green deck purchase under the Banker Lighter Mark

land purchase, as well as the Orcas dock purchase under the Ranker-Lichter-Mynn regime, and has led directly to the fiscal hole in which the County now finds itself.

No problem--we'll just raise taxes.

Peg Manning
Orcas

Stop The Petty Bickering & Buy The Property
Dear Editor:

To those speaking out against a downtown farmers market location, I'd like them to consider the following:

As residents of an island, we have few buttons to push to encourage economic start-ups here. The existing farmers' market has been just such a small business engine. Several successful town businesses began at our Saturday Markets - e. g.: Market Chef, Café Demeter, Bakery San Juan, and now Pablito's Taqueria.

A market and events facility on Nichols Street will also benefit surrounding businesses and help our downtown thrive.

Here is an opportunity to come together in support of strengthening our local economy -let's not waste it on petty bickering The farmers have agreed that the Nichols St. location is the best. I say let's join them in their efforts.

Regards,

Lee Sturdivant
Friday Harbor

Ranker Is Confused
Dear Editor:

I find the Senator's [guest editorial](#) on the Farmer's Market proposed for the Erickson property somewhat puzzling. We already have a farmer's market on San Juan. We all support the Farmer's Markets. Most of us support local agriculture as well. What we don't support is needless expenditure of funds designated for other purposes (open spaces) or needed for other programs (state budget) for a new Ag Guild Farmer's Market, when the existing one seems to be operating just fine, and when the Fairgrounds provides an alternative location that serves the purpose quite well.

Ranker claims that these funds were never competing with important programs like education or safety. That is true only because the funds were allocated to the Senate "slush" fund for "member-designated" projects -known as "pork"- instead. The project did not have to pass muster in the Senate, subjected to close review. The Senate gave Sen. Ranker the choice of his earmark, and we taxpayers have to live with the consequences.

Has Ranker even been near the building in question? It is unattractive and ramshackle, at best; it intrudes into the right of way; it's historical significance -if it ever had any- has been or will be eliminated by extensive remodeling already done or needed to make it habitable for any venture. There is no realistic parking or loading; the "park" gathering space is miniscule.

Finally, the communities that Ranker uses as examples of successful markets are all much, much larger than ours and most of them are quite different. The Town of Friday Harbor was wise enough to back away from the project. The Land Bank places its credibility at risk in using its funds for another in-town land purchase rather than its main charge, open space; and the Ag Guild does not seem to have the concept, money, staff, or membership sufficient to make this project a success. If it is not a success, the Town and the County will be stuck with it.

It seems a far more logical solution to move the market to the Fairgrounds, which has parking, infrastructure, and a serious need for the additional revenue that such

a project would bring.

Ask your Councilperson to review this project and put it to a vote in the fall.

Peg Manning
Orcas

Ranker Out Of Touch
Dear Editor:

After reading Kevin Ranker's editorial I think he has lost touch with what is happening on San Juan Island. I know that this happens to politicians as soon as they head off to some Capital somewhere. So here is a newsflash update for the new Senator.

Hey Kevin, we have a Farmers Market in Friday Harbor already. It is at the courthouse parking lot where you used to work. Did you forget we already have one? Did you know the State budget was in crisis before you promised to bring home this big piece of pork for a few of your buddies? We can't even afford to scrape the rust off the ferries and yet you promote this kind of wasteful spending?

Leave it to a tax and spend politician like Kevin to give us something we don't need and attempt to pay for it with money we don't have. Situation normal.

Gordy Petersen
San Juan Island

Open Letter To Land Bank
Dear Land Bank Board and County Council Board members,

I am becoming concerned that a few vocal citizens are giving a black eye to the majority of farmers in our community. I hope more alert and informed farmers will step up to protect the reputation of our agricultural community. Simply put, I am convinced that a network of politics is abusing our political system for personal gain at the expense of the community.

If you want to revitalize downtown, you ask the Chamber of Commerce and the business community what the best way to accomplish that would be.

If you want to support a special interest group with government monies, such as the Ag Guild it should be done in an appropriate manner. Government should offer a hand up rather than a hand out. Handouts lead to lifelong enabling that leads to dependency, rather than sustainability.

Here is what many in our community see:

The local Land Bank has agreed to support the purchase of the Erickson property, based on a request from some politically positioned individuals and by the Ag Guild. This commitment has been given without a viable business plan and formal feasibility plan (which means factual number rather than theoretical hopes), and without a completed appraisal of the Erickson property. To most of us, this kind of decision making is illogical and a poor use of tax payers' monies. To others, this looks like behind the scenes work of a "good old boys" network.

If the Land Bank Board follows through and ignores good business practices and common sense, the Land Bank will have a hard time garnering voter approval when the next vote on the Land Bank comes to the ballot box. The Land Bank idea was sold to the public as a conservation tool, not a "Development" tool. While the Land Bank holds the thin thread of "Historical" interest to support this use of Land Bank funds for the Farmers Market construction project, there is no doubt that Land Bank funds are supporting this "development project".

I ask the Land Bank Board to reconsider its commitment to this project and to get back to its basic environmental conservation job. The Land Bank should be keeping an eye out for environmentally sensitive critical areas in need of preservation, and accumulating funds to purchase these properties. Please leave

"development costs" to those who will benefit from the development. These entrepreneurs should not be asking the Land Bank for tax dollars to develop their businesses, and you should not be offering them funds without offering equal consideration to other equally deserving local entrepreneurial organizations.

Sincerely,
Frank M. Penwell
San Juan Island

Open Letter To County Council
Councilpersons:

I am writing to express my concern about the "Permanent Farmers Market"/Erickson Property project that is, apparently, moving forward despite substantial controversy. Like many, I was appalled to see that the Legislature had, in this time of extraordinary budget crisis, earmarked \$375,000 of taxpayers' dollars in its Special Session for this ill-considered project, while cutting innumerable important education and social service projects.

As a result, I requested under the Public Records Act all information from the Legislature, from the Governor, and from the Department of Commerce that would support this last-minute addition to the State's budget. As of April, the Department of Commerce reported having nothing about the project that it had been directed to fund. Neither the Governor nor the Legislature produced anything other than a small number of letters (pro and con) relevant to the expenditure of \$375,000 of state money for this project. No application, no feasibility study-nothing.

As for the County's part in this project, I understand that no appraisal was completed with respect to the value of the land despite the commitment by the County Land Bank of more than \$400,000 additional taxpayers' dollars.

Yet the Council approved the Land Bank's expenditure of this sum, not once, but twice, when the Land Bank's expenditure and management plans came before it. It has been suggested that the reported sales price may be hundreds of thousands dollars more than the value of the property.

Moreover, the Land Bank is reportedly committed to an ongoing operations subsidy. The "feasibility" study put forth by the project's principal proponent has no hard numbers, and would be found in the real world of business deficient to support any investment in the venture, but we're going ahead with another million-dollar project anyway.

As I and many others have already expressed, the suddenly ginned-up and frankly questionable "historical significance" of the building seems to be the tail wagging the dog in this project, now that LTAC and the Town of Friday Harbor have rejected it.

The Land Bank's principal mission is open space conservation, but regardless of the programmatic question, surely the Council has some obligation to look into the financial viability issues? Has the "feasibility analysis" been improved by the inclusion of real numbers yet? And is the Land Bank in fact committing annual operating money to the project?

There remains the question of which entity receives the state funds and who is stuck with bailing out the project if it fails. The AG Guild appears to have little capital and no track record. If it indeed is the intended grantee of the state money, it will be on the hook for considerable sums under rigorous grant conditions. If it fails, there will be an undistinguished, old and awkward building on the Land Bank's rolls -and hundreds of thousands of dollars unavailable to purchase open space. No doubt the taxpayers will get stuck with the cost of remedying that situation.

From a legal and government perspective, this substantial expenditure of taxpayer dollars warrants close financial review by the County, including at the very least an appraisal of the land value and a credible feasibility study.

From the perspective of participatory democracy, it warrants a referendum, particularly when County taxpayers are suffering reductions in services and virtually-certain property tax and special district tax increases.

Peg Manning
Orcas

The Erickson Building Will Be Home To The Farmer's Market

To the Editor:

I am responding to Bert and Dave Moorhouse's [Guest Editorial](#) about Friday Harbor Brickworks, the future year-round home of the San Juan Farmers' Market and a community and tourism-related events center.

The San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild and its many supporters are thrilled to be recipients of the State capital funds that, in addition to the Land Bank's purchase of a historic preservation and conservation easement and generous private donations, will help to make this project a reality. While we agree that in difficult times, there are many needs and worthy places for State and local governments, to invest, State capital funds can only be used for capital projects. State capital funds cannot be used to pay for ferry transportation costs or teacher salaries, however much all of us support the need for funding in these areas.

My goal in this letter is not to argue the appropriateness of including public sources of funding for the Brickworks project; this is something that individuals in our community differ on, and we will have to simply agree to disagree, and express our preferences in the ballot box.

I do want to address several factual inaccuracies in the Moorhouse's guest editorial, however.

The Ag Guild is developing this property according to Town code requirements - including the required curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements and the required on-site parking- the same as every other developer. We are also required by the Town to build an ADA-approved bathroom inside the Brickworks site during renovations, so that we are not dependent upon the public restrooms next door, although visitors to the market are naturally welcome to use the public restrooms as well.

The Ag Guild will own the 150 Nichols Street property, and the parcel will remain on the tax rolls. The Ag Guild will pay taxes, as does every other landowner in Town and on the island. We do not receive special treatment for our requirements to improve the sidewalk, provide a specified number of parking spaces; nor do we receive any special tax treatment from the Town or County.

The Moorhouse's editorial is -- quite simply -- mistaken on the aforementioned points, and we wish to correct the record.

Despite very strong support throughout the community, some are still unhappy about the choice of location. Our choice was based upon a very simple principle: successful farmers' markets are located in the center of commerce. While the Fairgrounds location was considered, we determined that it was not ideal due to location and the lack of dedicated facilities for markets on specific days of each week. Furthermore, while the cost of development would be significantly less (given the fact that the property and existing infrastructure is already publically owned), the operating budget would not be sustainable given the fairground's current rental fees as compared to the market's current vendor stall fees. While it will be a challenge to raise the necessary capital and start-up funds for the development of Brickworks on Nichols Street, it is more sustainable to raise one-time capital costs than to have on-going operating fundraising needs.

Farmers' market vendors will sell their own locally produced products: San Juan County farm raised vegetables, fruits, flowers, meats, and dairy products; seafood locally harvested and/or harvested by boats registered in San Juan County; locally prepared foods; and local, handmade arts and crafts. Markets held at Brickworks will not provide for re-sales or the sale of imports, and so will not compete with

will not provide for resales or the sale of imports, and so will not compete with retail businesses in Friday Harbor who do.

Those who have concerns about the rules under which we will operate markets at the Brickworks are welcome to talk with any board member, or address the issue at an upcoming Chamber meeting, since the Ag Guild has become a member of the Chamber of Commerce. We are happy to discuss the operating guidelines we are developing in partnership with the San Juan Island Farmer's Market Association and others interested in selling at the facility.

The Ag Guild looks forward to being good neighbors with our neighboring businesses in downtown Friday Harbor. And of course, we are proud to be developing the Brickworks, which will benefit our entire community.

Mark Madsen
Co-Chair, Board of Directors
San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild

FH Needs To Be Revitalized
To the Editor:

Thank you for the aerial shot of the Erickson Property. (2/26/10 "Town backs out...") Responsible Town officials vote just like these people did, but Hushebeck is also correct. The Town of Friday Harbor is in real need of something to revitalize the place.

Carefully look at your aerial photograph. This is the area in need of a master plan. In order to march toward something you might like you need to plan for it. Development will come anyway, better you lead the way. So this whole area gets looked at. What can it be? Sunshine Alley becomes a pedestrian walk connecting to many, many other walks connecting the entire hub. A central paving theme would help do it, so would touches like finishes and paint. (Sure you keep truck access as many hours as possible.) (Parking? Cry me a river, people, parking is always a huge headache.) Yes, you can do it. One need only to look at what is happening with the Ace Store "box" and other thoughtful upgrades to get a feel for it.

Another necessity is a Design Review Board for your central business district. No need to fear such a board if it is made up of the same people who own property and businesses in the area. Set it up right and you will get what you want. Not a hideous green awning.

So I would contend that Hushebeck is just as pragmatic as those thoughtful Council Members who rightfully looked out for their constituents financial well being. Maybe the Farmers Market ain't it right now, but maybe it could be a planned part of a march toward something!

Pete Groves
San Juan Island

Open Letter To Ranker
Kevin,

I am a 31 year resident of Friday Harbor and I would like to pass on a few thoughts about possible state funding for a Friday Harbor Farmers Market:

1. The State of Washington is desperately in need of finding new resources for raising money to meet state obligations; this is even more serious now that the state is required to better fund the school systems.
2. A few blocks from the proposed site is the San Juan County Fair Grounds. Fair grounds and farmers go hand in hand. A farmer's market is exactly what fair grounds are all about.. Our fair grounds has ample parking and the buildings are there for market purposes. Hundreds of people walk from the Port of Friday Harbor and the ferry landing to the fair grounds every year when the fair is on. The San Juan County Fair Board has tried to negotiate with the proponents as they would like to have the market at the fair grounds.

like to have the market at the fair grounds.

3. Downtown Friday Harbor has a parking problem and has had for years. Currently 30+ cars are parked on this property which will be displaced if the site is to become a farmers market. The supporters of the market say they will need 40 spaces for vendors and 60 spaces for customers. This is probably a little ambitious; but even if half of these numbers were correct, where would parking places be found? The ferry system has been contacted regarding the use of Lot B or Lot C and they were told "no way" could either of these lots be used.

4. This proposition would take this property off the tax roll. As you know Friday Harbor is already burdened with it's share of land off the tax roll.

5. A farmers market would only be active for a few months of the year and there would be little use for the market the rest of the time. The proponents have grandiose ideas of what else the property could be used for. They propose a park with seating and grass areas. We have Sunken Park two blocks away which gets very little use. We have Argyle Avenue Cahail Park which gets no use. We have the Port of Friday Harbor Park which does get some use in the summer time because of the view; it gets almost no use for eight months of the year. A park in the alley with no view in Friday Harbor will get almost no use.

6. The proponents have not thought out the long term cost of maintaining this property such as: insurance, utilities, maintenance, etc. Is this to become another burden on cash-strapped Friday Harbor?

7. The very vocal few proponents have gotten your attention while most of the citizens have remained silent. Why should the tax payer's of Friday Harbor and San Juan Island fund the ongoing burden of maintaining this property for a few vocal people? As I stated earlier, we have a fair grounds which is a few blocks away which is ideal for this purpose.

8. What we have is a group that wands a pie-in-the-sky facility for free. This is not fair to our local business people that must pay for rent, insurance, taxes and employees year-around.

Kevin, please, put the state funds to better use in a year when the money is desperately needed elsewhere.

Dave Moorhouse
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Lovel Not Conflicted
To the Editor:

This letter is in response to Christopher Hodgkin's accusations (*see below -Ed* regarding conflict of interest. Like many people in this community I wear multiple 'hats', having two jobs in addition to my volunteer activities. I had my job with the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild before I was elected to the County Council. Before taking office I contacted each of the County Council members and my fellow Council member-elect, the County Administrator, and the Prosecuting Attorney and asked if any of them had any objection regarding my job with the Ag Guild and my intention to continue that work. No one had any objections. The Prosecuting Attorney instructed me on what I must do and not do in order to avoid any conflict of interest and I have followed his instructions -and I continue to ask for his advice and follow it. I have stepped down and do not participate when issues regarding the 150 Nichols Street purchase have come before the County Council. The fact is that in September of 2008 (before my election to the County Council) the County Council unanimously approved the Land Bank's budget which included the \$400,000 expenditure related to the 150 Nichols Street property. Since I became a member of the County Council in January of this year there has been very little that has come to the County Council on this transaction because it is within the mission and budget of the Land Bank and the Land Bank Commission is handling the County's portion of the transaction.

Thank you for publishing this response.

Sincerely,
 Lovel Pratt
 San Juan County Council, District 1

Not Dumbfounded By Negative Reaction
 To the Editor:

I have read with interest the reports of the hearing on this proposed purchase, and spoken with two people who attended the session.

I have several comments. I am summarizing them rather than providing a full discussion of them, but will be happy to expound if any of the Council Members would like further amplification.

1. I believe that a farmers market would be a valuable resource for the community.
2. However, farming is a commercial venture, so the farmers wanting to sell their produce, in competition with other businesses, should not be subsidized by tax funds.
3. I agree with those who take the position that using tax dollars to provide a venue where merchants only have to pay rent on days when they use the facility is inappropriate. Similarly, charging different fees depending on the nature of the products to be sold is inappropriate. That is using tax dollars to subsidize special interest businesses. This is wrong.
4. The idea that this will be a tourist attraction and bring additional tourism to the islands is, in my opinion, a false justification. Tourists don't come to Friday Harbor to buy farm grown tomatoes or other produce. There are plenty of farmers markets on the mainland they can patronize. Nice try, folks, but no cigar.
5. I agree with the value of preserving the historic building. But it is clear that the plans for this building go well beyond that and alter the building in ways inconsistent with historic preservation. A much more appropriate use of the building would be to use it as an in-town adjunct of the Historical Museum, both to showcase the historic use of the building and to use it for rotating exhibits. This would indeed be a tourist attraction, and would leave the building in the hands of people who truly value its historical importance, not who just want to run businesses out of it which are completely unrelated to its historical use.
6. Parking is clearly going to be a serious problem. When the farmers market was held at the Courthouse parking lot, also an in-town location, the lot was often quite full and sometimes overly full requiring on-street parking in addition to all the parking in the lot. The Erickson site has nothing like the space, either on site or on nearby streets, to accommodate close to that level of traffic. When Pratt says the project will do whatever the town requires, of course she is planning to use public tax money for that purpose, not requiring that the vendors who will cause and benefit from the traffic will pay.

Overall, this is not the way to provide a farmers market for the benefit of the farmers and residents of the county. Such a market would be a useful addition to the community, but this is the wrong place and wrong use of tax dollars. Finally, Lovell Pratt should recuse herself entirely from the deliberations and discussion on this issue. She is clearly an interested party. It is inappropriate for her to use in any way her elected position to promote her personal economic interests. She should be silent throughout the entire deliberation and decision process. Anything else seems to me clearly to violate even the most basic ethical and conflict of interest principles.

Christopher Hodgkin
 San Juan Island

Apples-To-Apples?
 To the Editor:

The recent public forum concerning the purchase of 150 Nichols Street for historic preservation, public access, and a Permanent Farmer's Market revealed strong support within the community, but also some very important questions from community members. Most of these questions, such as parking, have been discussed in the pages of the Journal and other newspapers. But I'm hearing concerns that the Nichols project represents a "subsidy" to a small special-interest group -- local farmers -- and I wanted to add some perspective to this concern.

The idea, as I understand it, is that helping local farmers and producers build a market for their goods gives them an unfair advantage over businesses that rent commercial real-estate and establish storefronts. This would be true only if vendors at the Permanent Farmer's Market will pay less for their vendor stalls than a comparable storefront rental in Friday Harbor. To help understand whether this is the case, here are some estimates, based on informal surveys of downtown businesses. The goal here is to break down costs so that we can compare them in an apples-to-apples manner. I've chosen to do this by examining the fully-burdened cost per-square-foot, to occupy a retail location on an hourly basis in Friday Harbor. Since Farmer's Markets are less than a full day on Saturdays and Wednesdays, an hourly comparison per square foot places both types of businesses on an equal footing.

Obviously rental rates for commercial storefronts in Friday Harbor vary considerably. But discussions with a number of business owners in different buildings seem to indicate that rents and lease fees (inclusive of various costs like payments in lieu of property taxes, insurance, utilities) range between \$1 and \$2 per square foot, per month.

If we assume that a business is open an average of 40 hours per week (some are open much more, some less), that's 160 hours per month. This means, per square foot, for every hour open to the public, a commercial storefront costs an average of \$0.013. That's 1.3 cents per hour for every hour open to the public.

In the current design for the Permanent Farmer's Market, vendor stalls are 7 feet by 8 feet, or 56 square feet. Each stall (a vendor can rent more than one stall) costs the vendor \$10 per 3 hour market day; arts and crafts and prepared food vendors pay \$20 for their stalls. This means, per square foot, for every hour open to the public, a Farmer's Market stall costs \$0.06 (6 cents) per square foot per hour for a farmer, and \$0.12 (12 cents) for a prepared food or craft vendor.

Both retail shops and small farmers have other costs associated with their businesses, of course. Retail shops have employee expenses, inventory, and advertising, to name but a few. Farmers have seed costs, fertilizers and/or equipment, often labor costs for employees or internships, again to name but a few. But the point is that the cost of renting the retail sales space in downtown Friday Harbor will be several times greater for farmers than the typical storefront rental costs: 4 to 9 times greater. Hardly an unfair competitive advantage for farmers, especially when we consider the low margins and high production costs associated with farming.

But if we step back from the financial details for a moment, the greater question lies in whether public support for a Farmer's Market constitutes a subsidy, or instead is appropriate public support for commerce and business. I've heard it said that farming is a "special interest" and that the public should not be in the business of giving funds to special interests to help them do business. In the back of our minds, we might be thinking of the long history of "farm subsidies" where farmers are paid to grow certain crops, or at worst, paid NOT to grow crops. It's right to be leery of this type of "help" for farmers.

The current project is nothing like that. Towns exist, in large part, to help concentrate businesses -- of all types -- so that customers and suppliers can come together efficiently and share the burden of common infrastructure. Private businesses don't have to worry about constructing their own roads, or managing water supplies, and as we've heard throughout this process, parking is also common, shared infrastructure. In many ways, the public supports -- and "subsidizes" -- all businesses by maintaining and creating infrastructure. In other

words, the business of a town is to help create markets for local businesses.

What the Permanent Farmer's Market project does, using a combination of public funding and private fundraising, is to create a stronger, better market for local agriculture. It does not give anyone a "handout," since we're actually asking vendors to pay more for their space, per square foot per hour, than the current averages for commercial real estate in Friday Harbor. We're not paying anyone to grow anything, we're not handing money to farmers, we're encouraging commerce and capitalism in the best traditions of those words.

We're saying, as a rural community with a long history and tradition of agriculture, that we support farming in the best way possible: by encouraging farmers to grow their businesses by better marketing their products to local and visiting customers.

This really is a traditional and conservative way of fostering the growth of local agriculture -- by encouraging growth, and supporting markets -- rather than subsidizing individual farmers or providing handouts. Towns and local governments in this country have a long history of supporting common infrastructure for the countryside to bring its products to market. The proposed project to preserve, renovate, and use 150 Nichols Street as a location for the Permanent Farmer's Market is in the best tradition of town & rural partnership to foster economic growth.

Thank you for your time and attention; I hope your readers find this letter useful in understanding the debate over this important project.

Mark Madsen
San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild

Dumbfounded By Negative Reaction

Open Letter To The Mayor and Council Members

My wife and I own a 20 acre farm on Waldron Island. We operate a small market garden on about an acre of that. We have been selling our produce at the San Juan Farmers' Market every year since its start in the mid-80's, almost 25 years now. From its small beginnings at the Inter-West Bank parking lot through moves across Argyle to the lot where Ace Hardware now stands and to temporary sites at 150 Nichols and then Friday Harbor Freight, to our current site at the Courthouse parking lot, the Market has steadily grown into a very successful venue for County farmers to sell their produce directly to eager customers. With the addition of our Winter Market seven years ago, first at the Flea Market and then expanding to the Grange Hall and now at the High School as part of their Experience Food Project, the San Juan Farmers' Market offers our customers fresh, local produce all year around.

Because the Market was outgrowing both its summer and winter sites and did not have any long-term use agreement for either of them, several years ago an effort was begun to secure a dedicated, long-term home where both summer and winter markets could be held and extension of the market to additional days would be possible. The Agricultural Guild was formed with that as its first goal, and the proposal to locate the Market at the 150 Nichols Street site is the result of its efforts.

When the County Land Bank budgeted money to help fund the project we began to think this might actually be possible. When the Town Council agreed to join the effort to purchase the property and the Ag Guild and Farmers Market Association pledged to raise the additional funds necessary to renovate the building and develop the site, it seemed like all that was left to do was dotting the i's and crossing the t's. And then as reaction from a few vocal businessmen and women hit the opinion pages of the local media, it all began to look like it was too good to be true.

I am, frankly, dumbfounded by most of the negative reaction to this project. This kind of Public Private Partnership is the darling of conservatives everywhere. For

two levels of government and a private nonprofit to come together to fund something they all deem desirable seems like a win win win situation to me. The arguments against the project have been forceful and vociferous, but are mostly specious; although they seem convincing on the surface, they do not stand up to scrutiny.

The complaint that the town's purchase of the property would take it off the tax rolls is technically true, but the Ag Guild would pay the town an equal lease amount, meaning there would be no loss of revenue to the town. The Ag Guild would manage the site and raise revenue to cover the lease and other operating expenses by renting space to farmers to sell their goods and by renting the facility as a whole for events. Any shortfall in revenue, which is in fact forecast during the startup, would be covered by the Ag Guild, not the town. In that the town is not looking to make a profit from its lease of the site, the farmers could be seen to be getting a subsidy. Vendor fees would purposely be kept low so as to not price smaller farmers out and to encourage new farm enterprises to join. Although the Town of Friday Harbor is not in the habit of doing so, cities, counties and port districts everywhere regularly compete with each other to lure businesses and governmental agencies by offering tax breaks and low-cost leases.

This leads to specious argument #2; that public money should not be used to subsidize Market vendors who might compete with small businesses downtown. Public tax dollars are spent on many things, from fire departments to affordable housing, that are deemed to be for the public good. Farmers' Markets are increasingly being seen in this light not only because of the access they provide to locally grown food and the sense of community they help build, but because they have been shown to enhance local economies. They are being located into downtowns everywhere to help stimulate business. A recent study of Farmers' Markets in Wisconsin showed that nearby businesses benefited more than the Market vendors themselves. In Waukesha, while the vendors brought in about \$310,000, the surrounding businesses saw an increase of \$340,000 in revenues. Other studies have shown similar results. Furthermore, if the town doesn't buy the 150 Nichols Street property, someone else will. Whatever that new owner should decide to put on the site, be it condos, office space, restaurants, gift shops or real estate offices, it will just add to the already existing glut of condos, office space, etc. which will definitely compete with existing businesses. It seems to me that a thriving downtown Farmers' Market, where most of what is being sold is locally grown produce and which draws crowds of people to the neighborhood, would be the best result for struggling downtown shops. The multiplier effect for locally grown produce is the highest possible. When I sell \$100 of vegetables it all goes into my pocket to be spent at the hardware store, the grocery store, the gas station or the fuel dock, the occasional restaurant or to help my daughter through college. When the grocery store sells \$100 of California produce, \$90 of it immediately leaves the island to pay the distributors in Seattle, the trucking company, the packing house in California and a little bit of it to the farmer. Only \$10 of it stays on the island to circulate through the local economy.

Specious argument #3; that the purchase price of the property is too high, comparable properties have sold for less. I would argue that there are no comparable properties. This is the only one for sale of interest to the Town, the Land Bank and the Ag Guild, that would be suitable for a Farmers' Market. Ultimately, the value of a piece of property or anything else in a free market system is what a willing seller and a willing buyer agree it to be. In this case the seller has come down considerably from what was originally being asked.

Spurious argument #4; the Farmers' Market should just move out to the Fairgrounds. It doesn't seem to have occurred to those who suggest this that the biggest problem with this idea is that for a week at the height of the growing and selling season for the farmers, there is a County Fair going on at the Fairgrounds. Trying to hold a Wednesday and Saturday Market at the Fairgrounds during the Fair would be disastrous for the farmers. If you think parking is tight downtown, try finding a parking spot anywhere near the Fairgrounds Wednesday afternoon or Saturday morning during the Fair.

Another spurious argument being made is that the Land Bank should not be buying up commercial property in the town. Historic preservation and farmland

buying up commercial property in the town. Historic preservation and farmland preservation are both stated goals of the Land Bank. Buying this property and preserving the historic building on it certainly fits the former. As for the latter, in the last decade or so, farmland preservation groups have realized that you can't preserve farmland without also preserving farmers. Farmland doesn't stay farmland unless it is farmed, and it won't be farmed unless farmers can make a living at it. Helping to provide a place for small farmers to sell their goods could be a vital strategy to sustain the county's agricultural economy.

The concerns expressed over the lack of parking for this location are the only one I think has merit. It has been a concern for the Ag Guild and the vendors all along, and the Ag Guild is pursuing a number of options and has pledged to work with the town and other downtown businesses to develop long term solutions to the problem. But I think this issue has also been somewhat overblown. We have all been spoiled by the ease of parking around the Courthouse site. This is a rarity. Few Farmers' Markets have much, if any, dedicated parking. Friends who attend Markets in Seattle tell me they always have to park blocks away and walk into the Market. I've watched folks toting baskets and canvas bags stream into the very busy Ganges Saturday Market on Saltspring Island from wherever they could find parking on nearby streets and unused bank and church parking lots.

I hope you can see that any potential problems with this project are far outweighed by the possibilities for improved accessibility, diversity and vitality this new public space could bring to the downtown.

I urge the Town Council not to miss this one time opportunity to partner with the County Land Bank and the Agricultural Guild to preserve this historic property and enhance the economy and livability of the town and the islands.

Sincerely, Joel Thorson
Waldron

Washington Trust Supports Saving Bld

The Honorable David Jones
Mayor, Friday Harbor
PO Box 219

Dear Mayor Jones,

The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation is a statewide, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated to safeguarding Washington's historic and cultural resources through advocacy, education, collaboration and stewardship. It is reassuring to know that Friday Harbor shares similar values when it comes to historic preservation: the town has a preservation program in place; San Juan County has recently implemented several rehabilitation projects to its landmark courthouse; and in 2008, the Town of Friday Harbor received designation from the National Trust for Historic Preservation as one of America's Dozen Distinctive Destinations.

With the proposal to establish a permanent farmer's market at the Boede Cement Plant, Friday Harbor has yet another opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to historic preservation and local heritage. As one of the last remaining resources of its type in Friday Harbor, the cement plant is significant as an early example of an industrial building within the town's core. The agricultural tradition of the San Juan Islands is both compelling and rich. Establishing a farmer's market at the Boede Cement Plant would serve the dual purpose of providing an appropriate forum to showcase this tradition and offer an important case-study in adaptive reuse applicable to other communities across the state.

Historic preservation often requires creative solutions and willing partners, and it is refreshing to see both elements present in the cement plant proposal. It is thrilling to see the Town of Friday Harbor and the San Juan County Land Bank make such strong commitments to the region's heritage through this project. The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation fully supports efforts to rehabilitate the former Boede Cement Plant for the purpose of establishing a permanent farmer's market.

Sincerely,
Chris Moore
Field Director

FH Historic Board Supports Revitalization Strategies

Dear Editor,

The Town of Friday Harbor created the Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) to advise the town council on matters involving historic buildings and sites in our historic district. Our purpose is to foster the preservation of sites and structures that have identifiable historic significance.

As many people know, the San Juan Agricultural Guild has been working to purchase the old Friday Harbor Brick and Tile Co. Building on Nichols Street, which has been owned and used for many years by Erickson Electric. The proposed plan for this significant historical building is to restore the building for use as a year round farmers' market.

The Boede building was the site of the Friday Harbor Brick And Tile Co. which manufactured cement bricks used in the construction of many of our historic buildings, including the Town Hall. It's distinctive barn-style architecture and roofline are as important to Friday Harbor's historic district as the Gould (Geneste) and Bowman (DeStaffany/Needlework Boutique) residential houses are to the vernacular landscape. Iconic, it stands alone in representing the industrial history of Friday Harbor. Without it, the town's story is visually incomplete and the integrity of the district significantly diminished.

Fully developing our heritage tourism venues locally is a part of an overall strategy for making preservation of Friday Harbor's historic resources viable for property owners. It is well documented that cultural and heritage tourism are significant tourism strategies used by towns and cities nationwide to support the local economy. A study conducted by the Travel Industry Association and Smithsonian Magazine found that cultural heritage travelers stay longer and spend more money than ordinary tourists. Farmers' Markets play a vital part of historic districts in cities all over the state, including Seattle, Walla Walla, Cheney, Port Orchard, to name just a few. The HPRB believes the adaptive reuse of the Boede building would provide another popular and much used public venue, just as the Memorial Park project did along the waterfront.

The rehabilitation plans for the building are still in the conceptual stage, and will ultimately go through the proper design review process in order to qualify for the Town of Friday Harbor's historic preservation incentives. This is the same process that the Friday Harbor Center and Churchill Corner projects underwent in order to qualify for the Town's valuable historic preservation parking and height incentives. These projects resulted in historically appropriate, business spaces, jobs, and other important contributions to the local economy.

We believe the adaptive re-use of the historic Boede building will serve as a catalyst for the historically sensitive redevelopment of this critical inner block of the town core. The project is consistent with the goals of the Historic Preservation element of Friday Harbor's Comprehensive Plan, the most significant being

HCR-11 The Town should encourage revitalization strategies for the downtown that recognize and capitalize on the historic traditions of Friday Harbor.

HCR-12 The Town should continue to encourage developers to rehabilitate historic buildings with established incentives, as well as developing new incentives.

We have a unique opportunity to save a historic structure which is very well suited to the proposed use. Every time we lose another historic building, we lose an important part of what makes this place matter-the very thing that gives Friday Harbor its unique sense of place. Let's work together to figure out how to make this project good for the community and good for historic preservation.

Mary Jane Anderson
Historic Preservation Review Board
Town of Friday Harbor

Ag Board Responds To Cavanagh Letter

To: The Friday Harbor Town Council and the San Juan County Council

This letter is in reply to Cathy Cavanaugh's letter of October 25th (*See 2nd letter below -Ed*). I must preface this reply with the comment that if Cathy had indeed been looking for more information, then I am surprised that she, in light of her relationship to the Ag Guild did not contact me or any of my fellow Ag Guild Board members or our Project Director. I am happy, however, to address Cathy's questions here:

1. The comparison of the Ace Hardware property with the 150 Nichols Street property is flawed. The Ace Hardware property was sold at auction in a forced sale. This example of a distressed sale does not provide a good comparable.
2. The project architect has estimated the cost of the building remodel (including the second floor office suite) at \$162,000. The Ag Guild's draft capital costs budget includes an additional 15% contingency to bring the total estimated cost to \$186,300 for the historic building renovation. Additional site development cost estimates total \$172,500. However, these do not include any sweat equity. The Ag Guild will reduce construction and site development costs through work parties on the building remodel as well as the outdoor site work. Ag Guild Board member Mark Madsen, who is Chair of the Fundraising Committee, has offered to talk further with anyone interested in the non-Town and non-Land Bank aspects of the funding for the Market Facility.
3. There are currently no business owners or business employees leasing long-term parking at 150 Nichols Street. All parking is leased by part-time San Juan Island residents. The property is currently off limits to public parking. The development of the market facility at 150 Nichols Street will include approximately 10-12 parking spaces that may be made available for public use on non-market days, which would be a net gain in parking for that area. Is it reasonable that the farmers market should be asked to solve an endemic downtown parking problem when in fact it is meeting the Town of Friday Harbor's parking requirements? It is true that the issue of the sidewalk on Nichols Street has not yet been addressed. Pedestrian access, however, will be greatly improved via Nichols Street to the North end of the building.
4. We are clearly in a difficult economic downturn; spending in town is down and shops are closing. The fear that there will be competition with local merchants, and that it will be unfair, fails to account for the business, production and land expenses that farmers must deal with. As a San Juan County farmer, I can attest that producing food on this island is very expensive and farmers are not in a position nor do they have the desire to undercut anyone. In the long-term this fear is contrary to the realities of the marketplace. With the current market location at the Courthouse parking lot, downtown merchants are missing the opportunity to have hundreds of people walk by their businesses and the potential for those market customers to become their customers as well. This project would rejuvenate the downtown core, not detract from its economic viability. I have included a section from the 2004 Rapid Market Assessment below (the full report is available in the Feasibility Study Appendix at: <http://www.sjiagguild.com/feasibility.php>).
5. The survey referred to is the 2008 SJC Food Producers Survey. The first page summarizes the number of respondents from each island. San Juan Island had a total of 13 respondents. The results of this survey indicated interest from farmers on other islands who don't currently sell at the San Juan Farmers Market, particularly for the mid-week and winter markets. The San Juan Farmers Market Association currently has 44 member/vendors (32 farms, 3 seafood vendors, and 9 food purveyors).

Cathy concludes by advocating for the Fairgrounds as her preferred location for the

permanent market facility. A major reason for pursuing a downtown location is that it is the San Juan Farmers Market Association's preferred location. Based on the experiences of other markets, the downtown location will be the most successful location for vendors. The Fairgrounds' location outside the downtown core outweighs the advantages of the onsite parking. Furthermore, the Fairgrounds is working towards becoming more of an event facility, and these events may not be compatible with the farmers' market (i.e. the recent Island Rec K9 Carnival). It is unclear whether or not the fairgrounds will be able to develop any additional structures (impervious surfaces) that might be able to be dedicated for the use of the market on Saturdays and Wednesdays. In addition, the current facility use fees would not likely allow for a sustainable operating budget given the current vendor fee structure. It is more feasible to have a one-time capital facilities fundraising campaign than an annual operating fundraising campaign. A primary goal of the Ag Guild is to secure a year-round facility dedicated for the farmers market on Saturdays and Wednesdays with a sustainable operating budget that maintains current vendor fees.

Cathy advocates for the Fairgrounds location because it will "support a County facility that currently could use the support". It does not make sense to ask local farmers and artisans to support the Fairgrounds at the risk of a likely loss to their own sales revenue as well as the loss of the potential economic benefits to the existing downtown businesses.

This project's greatest strength is that the development of the market facility at 150 Nichols Street will address several goals of the Town of Friday Harbor, the San Juan County Land Bank, and the Ag Guild simultaneously in Friday Harbor's downtown core:

- *The revitalization of an under-utilized property
- *Economic development opportunities for local farmers, seafood harvesters, artists, and food purveyors; as well as for the surrounding merchants
- *The preservation of the only remaining historic industrial building
- *The creation of additional greenspace and greater pedestrian access
- *The marketing, processing, distribution, cold and cool storage, and educational facilities needed to promote sustainable agriculture in San Juan County

Elaine Kendall
SJI Agricultural Board
San Juan Island Farmer

In Support of Farmers Market In FH

Dear Council Members,

I write in support of a permanent farmers' market in Friday Harbor, and in particular to support locating it at the old Friday Harbor Brick location on Nichols Street.

Let me first speak to the need for a permanent farmers' market. I have had some involvement with individual farmers and with a large farmers' market for many years, but since moving to San Juan County several years ago, I have become much more directly involved, including serving on the county's Agricultural Resources Committee and its Farmer Enrichment subcommittee. Agriculture was once a far larger part of the county's life, but cheap oil, cheap fertilizer, and abundant irrigation water moved much of what had been our agriculture to industrial-scale farming east of the Cascades and other such places. Now that fuels and oil-based fertilizers are getting more and more expensive, and future water supplies are uncertain, to say the least, those trends have reversed. Driven also by a growing distrust of industrial agriculture, a desire to know where one's food comes from, a desire to eat better, and increasing interest in the quality of food, small-scale farming is getting re-established and growing quickly.

So while agriculture in San Juan County may be smaller than it was 50 years ago, it is already a larger physical and economic presence on our islands than it was ten or even five years ago, and every indication is that it will continue to grow. What a permanent farmers' market does is make room for that growth. With an expanded selling season, more farmers will take on the expense and effort of extending crop time. With more demand, more people will turn to farming and

more acreage will be reclaimed for farms. Quite beyond this boot-strapping effect, the planned storage and processing facilities will be crucial to farmers seeking to create value-added products instead of just selling raw materials, and these value-added products also naturally extend the farm-sales season. Thus, although the current Courthouse parking lot space may be adequate for our current supplies of fresh produce for a short peak season, it is completely inadequate as a resource to allow local agriculture to rebuild.

Turning to the Nichols Street site, it seems to me an excellent site for a permanent farmers' market: it is in the center of town, which integrates using the market with downtown shopping and other services; the location places it front-and-center as a tourist draw, as other town and city central markets have demonstrated; and the existing building apparently can be renovated to provide the needed storage and food preparation facilities that allow expanding the season and doing added-value products. I have heard people object to the lack of parking at the site, but I think this is not a meaningful objection. I lived for years parking two blocks from a farmers' market, and I know that walking to the car is just fine ♦" something the market's surveys have confirmed. For large purchases, it's easy to set up driving by afterwards to pick things up from a loading zone.

Even though I think the Nichols Street site is a good one for our farmers' market, I think the reverse is even more true: the proposed permanent farmers' market will be enormously good for Friday Harbor! The renovated building and grounds will replace a blighted dead space in the center of the town with an attractive building, a beautiful park, and pedestrian connections that should open up that whole side of downtown. Right now, once the tourists have seen the whales or gone bike riding, what we hear is "What is there to do in Friday Harbor?" Unfortunately, there isn't enough. We have one main drag (Spring Street) and a few attractions and shops down side streets, but the middle of Nichols Street and all of Sunshine Alley are spaces that turn people back. With the Friday Harbor Brick building functioning as a farmers' market, other events leasing the space for greater use, and with its grounds an attractive public space, pedestrian traffic should increase greatly, to the benefit of all downtown businesses.

All in all, I think the Nichols Street site for a permanent farmers' market is a brilliant coming together of a several purposes to produce a whole much greater than the sum of its parts. I applaud the Land Bank and the Town of Friday Harbor for their vision.

Sincerely,

Hawkins Pingree
San Juan Island

RE: Ag Guild proposal for Farmers Market facility

To: The Friday Harbor Town Council and the San Juan County Council

I am a huge supporter of the local Agriculture community and have personally volunteered a lot of hours to assist the Ag Guild in the past few years. I very much want a year-round facility for the local community to use to purchase local agriculture products. I know this can be a strong new business incubator and contribute positively in many ways to our economic base and community well being. However, I do not have enough information to know if the current proposal regarding the Erickson building on Nichols is the best location or project to facilitate this goal and I don't think the Town Council or County Council have enough information either. I have read the full Feasibility Study (posted on their website) very carefully. I have been a CPA working with the Small Businesses in San Juan County for over 23 years.

Here are my questions:

1. \$775,000 in tax dollars are being used to purchase this building. Given two recent sales in the Town Core of commercial property (i.e. Ace Hardware at \$954,000) this hardly seems realistic for that property. Why are you not requiring a

current independent appraisal before this decision is made? The Assessed Value of the Ace building is 2.6 million. A recent appraisal put the value at 1.4 million. The Assessed Value of the Erickson Building is \$699,000. The purchase price makes no sense to me.

2. In addition, there will be substantial renovation costs associated with getting this property ready for use. I have seen rough estimates of this cost in the Feasibility Study prepared by the Ag Guild, but those numbers (around \$250,000) seem totally unrealistic given the plans that are being promoted by the Ag Guild. The Councils and taxpayers need to know a realistic number of what this property will cost to be ready to be a Farmers market and where that money is going to come from.

3. By locating the local market on Nichols Street, the patrons and Vendors need parking and will be taking up spaces that have been used by customers and owners of the other small businesses in the Town core who are paying 100% of their year-round rent or property expenses. Saying the Ag Guild will support efforts to increase parking the future does not cut it. Parking should be dealt with before this project goes any further. The Feasibility Study says they need 30-40 Vendor spaces and 60-80 customer spaces. Why isn't the parking issue dealt with before this decision is made? As I understand it at this point, they will actually be evicting the current small business owners who lease parking at this location. They lease the spaces so that they can free up street parking for their customers. By the way, having no sidewalks on Nichols St. and the building actually encroaching into the Town easement for providing sidewalks is not addressed in the plans or Feasibility study.

4. This location is in the center of small businesses that have had no tax dollar assistance for paying their rent or purchasing their buildings. These small businesses have to pay these costs year round and also have Employees (i.e. jobs) that could be jeopardized by adding the potential tax subsidized competition created by this project. By having "ready-to-eat" and locally made products (jewelry, art, clothing, etc.), this tax-subsidized property will compete with the small businesses downtown. In this economy, people are very selective in what they spend money on and are spending less all the time as our County and Town revenues demonstrate. I am very concerned about the negative impact on our current small businesses that do not have their property expenses paid for. Has this been considered?

5. In looking at the Feasibility study, it is clear that even their own projections will not support the ongoing costs of this project. They estimate \$1800 per year for Advertising and then proceed to lay out a marketing plan (current website, regional newspaper, magazine, and radio ads, rack cards with Certified Folder on all the ferries) which will easily run over \$50,000 per year based on what current local businesses are paying. I assume they have updated projections. The Councils need to know exactly (and realistically) how the ongoing costs will be paid for. Their own feasibility study shows a survey by the current Farmers Market Vendors. It reflects 18 of them will do a Saturday market in the Spring, Summer and Fall and 10 will do a mid-week. 15 have said they would do Sat. market in winter. This does not seem like enough to me to justify this space. Obviously, a lot of other use of the space will have to occur. The feasibility of renovating the upstairs into office space and leasing it is extremely unrealistic in this market. We have a huge number of inexpensive empty office spaces (with parking) available. Do you have projections that show this is a financially feasible project?

Finally, the major objection to selecting the Fairgrounds (which would allow the locals easy access and parking and support a County facility that currently could use the support) was the zoning was not appropriate. Well that will probably change the first of next year based on a proposal in front of the County Council. The Fairgrounds would work extremely well for the local market and there would be funding for marketing the location to tourists not spent on maintaining an expensive downtown property. In addition, if they wanted, the Farmers could continue using the Courthouse for the Sat. market. Believe me; I know this is an unpopular position. However, it is your job to look out for all our small businesses and the local community. I know the Tourists do not provide 40% of the income to the Vendors at the Farmers Market year round as implicated in the Feasibility

the vendors at the farmers market year-round as implicated in the feasibility study. They do not purchase their groceries for the week like I do and they are not at the winter market. I'm sure on the one day in the summer the survey was taken 40% of the people in the market could have been tourists. But, again, they did not spend 40% of the money.

Please give this proposal careful consideration and do what is best for all the businesses on the Island.

Cathaleen Cavanagh
San Juan Island

Letter On Farmer's Market to Land Bank Director Lincoln Bormann

Lincoln,

I ask you to please reconsider your support for the historical easement on the Erickson/Nichols Street property for the Permanent Farmers Market. This specific proposal is based on a goal that is not likely to be successfully achieved and acquisition of the property is not in the best interest of the people of San Juan County.

I support the current farmer's market and have enjoyed participation in it. I support agriculture and small farms. I would like to see agriculture thrive in the islands. I support a farmers market but not in this location. The Erickson property does not make sense on many levels.

I have heard the following arguments (Bold Type) in support of allocating Land Bank resources to the Town of Friday Harbor. I would like you to consider my counter points here.

People in Friday Harbor pay into the Land Bank from real estate transactions yet town residents get no open space benefits.

Town residents benefit from reduced residential density on the island resulting in reduced traffic at the Ferry Terminal and less congestion. Parks, trails, recreational opportunities, and access to shoreline areas are available on San Juan Island for all Islanders including town residents.

Town residents can enjoy the open space and farmland resources available to everyone.

Visitors to the Island are drawn by the scenic beauty created by the preservation programs and spend money in Town (the primary commercial zone) that exclusively benefits town residents through sales tax. It can be argued that residents on Orcas and Lopez pay into the Land Bank yet they are not getting this kind of subsidy for a farmers market on their island. Certainly the town residents are not deprived of any benefits and, in fact, benefit equally, if not better.

The building is an historical landmark.

The building is a dilapidated 80+/- year old structure with questionable historical significance to the public. If it is rebuilt according to current codes with new materials the historical value may be lost. Restoration of the adjacent public restrooms is an example of this.

The existing structure encroaches into the sidewalk right of way on Nichols, which stops foot traffic in both directions. Because of this interference, the building and may have to be moved or reconfigured. The renovation to bring the building to today's building codes would include elevator to access the second floor to satisfy ADA requirements, and many structural improvements that may require the building to be completely rebuilt. The plans submitted include a large tower that has no historical significance to the site.

The use preserves and supports agricultural open space.

The current farmers market at the Courthouse supports this use now. There is no evidence that agriculture will increase because of this proposal nor is there any evidence that farm products can be produced in quantities that can sustain a year around location. Our comprehensive plan encourages farm stands and home

occupations that support open space and agriculture. Local farm products are available in many local shops and public markets around the islands. There is no compelling un-met need for the land Bank to invest in an expensive facility in order to preserve agriculture.

The use of Land Bank funds for the "Permanent Farmers Market" is a mistake. You might be investing in a project that is not economically feasible and a possible ongoing liability to taxpayers. The public would not benefit from a project that may prove unsustainable and that would require continual cash subsidies to stay afloat. Proponents point to Farmer's Markets in Bellingham and Olympia as successful models. These markets have one thing Friday Harbor does not-a year around population that can sustain a viable customer base.

The initial property price is small compared to the cost of compliance with regulations. The Town is requiring 60 parking spaces as a development requirement. The Town now charges \$13,500.00 for "parking in lieu" fees. The site plan submitted by the PFM group shows 7 spaces. Therefore they will need to provide 53 additional spaces. They will need to pay the town approximately \$715,500.00 for the parking fees. This is almost equal to the property price. The business community will not stand mute if the Town decides to selectively enforce parking regulations-forcing private sector business to provide and pay for parking while subsidizing a public market.

Cost estimates for renovation and code compliance, property appraisals, and estimates of potential sales are not available or are being withheld from the public by the proponents of this project. This should be reason enough for you to withhold funding for it.

This project is being pushed by special interests that are attempting to use the Land Bank for their own agenda. The Land Bank is for preserving open space in the county for all to enjoy-not buying up limited and valuable commercial property in an urban growth area. This is a perversion of the mission of your important preservation group. We simply do not have enough land in San Juan County designated for commercial use. For these reasons I ask you to withdraw all financial support for the Erickson/Nichols Street/PFM project.

Sincerely,
Gordy Petersen

Misperceptions On Farmer's Market
Letter to Editor:

One thing you gotta love about the islands: for every two people you'll find 3 opinions. The fate of farming on the islands is no exception. Mr. Petersen's letter (see *below*) contains broad generalizations and some misperceptions about the project, and about the use of public funds for the public good. As a participant on the tax roles, and a business owner that creates real jobs and pays real taxes in our community, there are a few points I would like to make in support of the Permanent Farmers' Market, an in-town resource for farmers.

From ancient times markets have been in cities, towns and villages because they are a vibrant part of the landscape that connects farmers with their customers. To relegate the farmers' market in this community to the fair grounds like another entertainment, sideshow or traveling antique show will damage the relationship between the town, the country and our visitors.

There are over 130 farmers' markets in the State of Washington. Most of them occur in or near the core of residential or commercial activity in their communities. It is interesting that in many areas shopping malls have welcomed farmers' markets. Contrary to Mr. Petersen's view, this demonstrates that many merchants do not feel the market is a competitor, but rather a traffic generator. The National Main Street Organization has urged communities to put the farmers' market downtown in order to help promote downtown as a cohesive whole.

The survey Mr. Petersen referred to as anecdotal and unscientific actually used a well-developed tool called a Rapid Market Assessment. That study was performed

in 2004 in conjunction with a workshop by leaders in the Farmers' Market community and included presentations by people involved in farmers' markets in public spaces from Bellingham, Tacoma and other locations. At our booth at the Farmer's Market every Saturday, we ask most of our customers where they are from, and I can corroborate that about 35-50% of our summer customers are visiting the island. Furthermore, as a past member of the county's LTAC I believe the use of funds for this community facility is entirely in line with the letter and the spirit of state law regarding use of lodging tax promotion funds.

I'm sure Mr. Petersen knows a lot about the retail grocery business. Certainly the challenges of managing overhead in the retail sector is not to be taken lightly. However, the Farmer's market is not solely about selling produce. There is a rich compendium of produce, fruits, meats, condiments, and farm-based products of every description. One key element is that the market acts as vital incubator of small agricultural and food-based business here on the island. These create jobs with working wages for those that participate. Some, such as Pelindaba Lavender have grown past the market and have a successful business model and product line tested at the farmers' market. Others, such as Thirsty Goose Farm have created new products that were introduced and popularized at the market and are now in wider distribution and no longer are limited to market sales. Many other market vendors, farm-based and town-based, are in fact are creating income (and tax revenues) all year-round.

For us at States Inn & Ranch our farmers' market revenue is a significant portion of the income that allowed us to hire 9 FHHS students and grads this year alone to work in the gardens, make value-added agricultural products, and sell them at the market. These jobs for young people are vital to our future. A permanent market in town will help us provide work opportunities during the school year as well. Their wages flow into the community, and the lessons they learn working benefit their lives and enrich our island. We'll need fewer jails and drug rehab programs if our kids can built a sense of self esteem and community connection through their work. That is good use of public funds.

Towns need infrastructure. Once there was a dairy, and several food stores, two hardware stores and a shoe repair, in downtown Friday Harbor. Year by year those businesses close, or relocate uptown somewhere, often replaced by businesses that sell imported products to the tourist market. We are slowly losing the infrastructure that preserves the historical nature of the town, and slowly removing reasons for residents to go down Spring Street. Right now this building that has generated jobs since 1920 has fallen on hard times. This use of public funds will turn a cyclone fence covered parking lot into a vital resource and a source of community pride, with no net loss of revenue to the town. How is that a bad thing?

Mr. Peterson is doubtful that the agricultural production on the island can sustain a market for more than a few hours a week. Historically agriculture production sustained the island, so we know it can be done. Many farmers grow far more than they sell on Saturday. They distribute through CSAs, to restaurants, and their farm stands. A central distribution facility to get farm-based products to the consumers will decrease the amount of driving that goes on, allow the elderly without cars to have more access to healthy fresh food, and reduce the time farmers spend delivering products. This will give current farmers the logistical support to increase production, facilities to realize revenue during the winter months, and increase the likelihood that new farms and new farmers will be able to succeed and be around to replace all of us "gray heads."

Keeping the downtown vital, preserving historical structures, creating jobs, paying taxes and revenue to the city, keeping farmers on their farms. These are some of the real, tangible community benefits that will be gained from this good and proper use of public funds for the public good. We, the public will benefit, as will those who follow us in years to come.

Richard Foote
States Inn & Ranch

Farmer's Market Intentions
Letter to Editor:

It is my great pleasure to be the Project Director for the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild's Permanent Farmers' Market project. This tourism-related facility will provide San Juan County's current and future island farmers, food processors, and artisans with the marketing, storage, distribution, processing, and educational facilities they need, thus increasing both residents' and visitors' access to local products.

I want to assure the community that the Ag Guild intends to pay property taxes and/or lease fees in lieu of taxes to the Town of Friday Harbor. In addition, the facility will not be used as a location for a flea market, nor provide for re-sales nor the sale of imports. Market vendors will sell their own locally produced products: San Juan County farm raised vegetables, fruits, meats, and dairy products; seafood locally harvested and/or harvested by boats registered in San Juan County; locally prepared foods; and local, handmade arts and crafts.

Agricultural production is growing in San Juan County. The USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service conducts a census every five years. In the most recent 2007 agricultural census, San Juan County's total farm acreage increased 25% as compared to an approximate 2% decrease in both the State and the Nation. The market value of San Juan County's agricultural products sold in 2007 totaled over \$3.6 million. Crops sales alone increased 47% from \$1,146,000 in 2002 to \$1,688,000 in 2007. Direct marketing sales (sold directly to individuals for human consumption - such as Farmers' Market sales) were first recorded in 1997. San Juan County's direct marketing sales increased 140% from \$174,000 in 1997 to \$418,000 in 2002, and increased again by 77% to \$739,000 in 2007.

The Permanent Farmers' Market facility will positively impact our community through

- A stable, year-round location for the San Juan Farmers' Market to thrive
- Increased availability of the freshest, most flavorful, and most nutritious local farm-raised and prepared foods all year
- Increased opportunities for residents and tourists to buy local products and reduce their carbon footprint
- Successfully addressing several San Juan County goals including farmland preservation, tourism promotion in the off-peak season, and economic development with the greatest multiplier effect
- Increased self-sufficiency which is important for local emergency preparedness
- Increased economic stability of existing farms and the encouragement of new farms
- The retention and creation of jobs through the Permanent Farmers' Market facility's expanded product development and marketing opportunities
- The creation of new jobs through the Permanent Farmers' Market facility as a proven business incubator

In the current economic crisis, regional food systems have gained increased importance given their ability to successfully address economic development, community food security, and global warming. The Permanent Farmers' Market facility will not only provide a year-round home for the San Juan Farmers' Market and for Arts & Crafts Markets, but also the revitalization of an historic property, including a green space and increased pedestrian access in Friday Harbor's downtown core.

Lovel Pratt
Project Director
San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild

Open Letter To FH Town Council
Letter to Editor:

To: Town of Friday Harbor

From: Gordy and Lori Petersen

Dear Town Council,

I have been a past member of the Farmers Market and my wife Lori is an active Master Gardener who attends and works the Market Frequently.

We are opposed to the proposal of a permanent Farmers Market that would take [commercial property off the tax rolls](#) and subsidize groups who would compete for market share with existing businesses that pay their own way all year-round.

We have a combined 60 years experience in the grocery business. We understand the realities of selling produce. The truth is that selling produce doesn't support much overhead. We'd like to see low overhead options and multi-use facilities like the fairground studied with the same intensity as the current expensive downtown site.

Proponents of the permanent farmers market point to a non-scientific informal survey taken several years ago in mid-summer to claim that tourists make up nearly 40% of the market customer base. I think this is anecdotal evidence at best and should not be the basis for granting LTAC funds to this group. Grants of this magnitude should be based on facts rendered only an unbiased and scientific survey.

- The Land Bank is for preserving open space not buying up limited and valuable commercial property. It is a perversion of the mission of this important preservation group to buy up limited commercial space in an urban growth area. We simply do not have enough land in San Juan County designated for commercial use.
- The Electric Co. (Erickson) parcel has produced taxes and jobs since 1920. It doesn't make sense to take it off the tax rolls and give it to a non-profit subsidized group.
- \$800,000.00, which is the approximate cost of this parcel, is only the start of costs to bring this building up to health and safety standards. The building may need to be entirely rebuilt to comply with the codes required for this type of use.
- We should not take parking spaces out of the town core and create more demand for parking at the same time.
- During the peak harvest season the market only has inventory for a few hours one day a week. It is doubtful that the inventory needed for a full-time farmers market can be sustained for more than a few hours per day even at the peak of harvest season.
- I'm afraid that it will turn into a "flea market" and compete with local businesses that pay taxes and provide year-round employment.

Before you consider any plan like this in the commercial core of our town, please ask main street gallery owners, bakeries, deli owners, grocers, book-sellers, craft shop owners if they like the idea of subsidizing their competition with funds they have earned by their hard work and paid in as taxes.

Thank you for taking time to consider our views.
Gordy and Lori Petersen