

To: Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space
From: Polygrarian Institute (PI)
Regarding: Proposal for PI to lease park lands for public teaching farm
Date: April 4, 2017

Parties Associated with this Proposal

The Polygrarian Institute (PI) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with a vision to grow the next generation of conscientious farmers, innovative educators, and sensible leaders who will collectively push the pendulum of local food production in a new direction. Through intensive training and mentorship programs at our public teaching farm, students will experience the interconnectedness of food systems and develop contemporary methods to deploy effective change in our community.

Our mission is *cultivating community based food systems through education, research, & civic engagement.*

The Polygrarian Institute (PI) was founded in 2016 by the former Executive Director of Urban Roots, Jeff Bryant. PI's first project is a successful partnership with the University of Nevada, Reno on the High Desert Hops Project. This collaboration introduces hops as a viable crop for farmers in the high desert and works with area brewers who are excited for a way to get involved with the local food movement. The University will continue to develop this program while the Polygrarian Institute is turning its attention to establishing a public-friendly demonstration farm that serves the Truckee Meadows community through numerous multi-faceted phases.

Our organization is governed by an enthusiastic Board of Directors comprised of some of our area's most vocal advocates for sustainable local food systems including Jeff Bryant, Melissa Nixon, Neil Bertrando, and Chef Mark Estee, owner of Liberty Food & Wine Exchange in downtown Reno. Our operational team consists of a devoted collective of local food and community health promoters that have demonstrated experience in the areas of entrepreneurship, small business management, small scale commercial farming, education, nutrition, and fundraising (see Appendix A).

Proposal Outline

- PI is seeking to sign a minimum five year lease with Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space.
 - Our preferred location is at Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park, adjacent to Mayberry Drive and just East of the historic Caughlin Ranch House (see map in Appendix B) but we are open to identifying alternate locations with guidance from parks staff.
- PI will develop a productive urban teaching farm.

- PI will grow food on the acreage that will primarily focus on seasonal annual vegetables, but may also include perennial crops and fruit trees. PI also proposes to cultivate and manage existing food plants at additional park locations (the Bartley Ranch orchard, for example).
- PI will operate a field school for agricultural education with existing curriculum developed by regional partners.
 - The field school will focus on providing hands-on opportunities for young future farmers. Alumni will be prepared to initiate their own agri-business, effectively advocate for local, state, and federal policies that will enhance their food system, and serve as ambassadors of change for how we participate in our future.
- Produce grown on the farm will be distributed to the community through three initiatives: 1) a prescription produce program in partnership with local health organizations and institutions 2) Weekly produce shares for subscribing farm members (which may be subsidized to include low income families), and 3) Direct sales to local restaurants as a revenue generating activity.

Alignment with Guiding Principles

The proposed partnership between PI and Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space is a perfect fit with the County's current strategic plan. Urban agriculture projects are popping up in cities across the nation (see Appendix C) and can serve as an integral aspect of strategic planning that promotes healthy living, economic development, leadership formation, and environmental stewardship.

PI seeks to establish a partnership with Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space that will bring forward the potential of our County's neighborhoods to produce sustainable food systems that increase access to healthy food for Northern Nevada residents and showcases Nevada's rich agricultural foundations by engaging underutilized public space. This partnership represents a forward thinking collaboration between the County and PI for the purpose of elevating the quality of life for Washoe County citizens by offering new opportunities for civic engagement and by mentoring a generation of regional leaders who are trained to seek progressive solutions to the challenges of sustaining vibrant economic, social, and environmental initiatives.

There is essentially no required financial investment for this partnership from the County. PI is asking for a free, long term lease of public property that is not currently being used to its potential. We are excited to work with Parks staff to identify a mutually advantageous site and we have already been considering a portion of Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park in consultation with Parks Administration.

Unique and Innovative Aspects of this Proposal

PI is a new concept in Washoe County and fills a gap between the exposure and education supplied to our K-12 students through school garden and secondary agricultural education, and local small farmers in the areas just outside of Reno/Sparks. PI will provide the opportunity for young adults interested in starting agricultural enterprises to get valuable hands-on experience on a real working farm while benefiting the greater community by serving as a model for environmental stewardship and public wellness.

There is currently no other organization in Washoe County that has the capacity or the mission to provide the type of training and mentorship for young farmers that PI is proposing.

Proposed Benefits to the County and the General Public

- Builds community capacity to sustain an accessible local food system.
- Promotes positive lifestyle changes through healthy eating and outdoor activities.
- Celebrates Nevada history by recreating agricultural opportunities within our cities.
- Creates new uses for Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space.
- Cultivates community leaders who are forward thinking and concerned with environmental stewardship and healthy communities.
- All proceeds from PI activities will be reinvested in public service programming for the benefit of Washoe County residents.

Desired Delivery

PI is seeking a long term lease (at least five years) of park acreage with an option to renew at the end of the agreement. We are initially seeking a lease of five acres and would like the option to negotiate for more land in the next 3-5 years dependent on PI program needs and budget.

Support and Financial Commitments, Capital Costs, and Financial Capacity

PI proposes to use a portion of the irrigated acreage at Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park (or other suitable location as negotiated with Washoe County Regional Parks and Open Space) to establish a five acre demonstration farm that produces vegetables in a high density, regenerative model. The produce from this farm will be distributed to the Truckee Meadows community through a prescription produce program in partnership with local health organizations and through farm memberships that provide a weekly share of produce to farm subscribers (similar to a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) food basket program business model).

Costs of this partnership to the County will be minimal. PI will cover all costs associated with farming including: seeds for planting; equipment and amendments to prepare the soil for vegetable production; temporary shelters to secure farm equipment; fencing to separate the farm area from the rest of the park; public engagement materials and advertising to promote the partnership; staff to manage the farm; and the cost of water beyond what is currently being supplied to the park. PI expects costs for the start-up and first phase (summer of 2017 through the end of the year) of this project to total approximately \$100,000 and seeks funding from private foundations, public grants, and farm revenue from sales and donations.

PI and its Board of Directors has a successful history of developing and maintaining a diverse funding portfolio including State and Federal agencies, private foundations and corporations, individual supporters and customers, and fee-for-service activities.

Unique Intellectual Property

Not applicable.

Appendix A

Below is specific information regarding the members of PI's current core operational group. Many more volunteers make up the PI organizational community, but these people are primarily responsible for the creation of the present proposal.

Anna Aguirre- Anna is a local business owner and consultant who works in the healthcare industry and has ties with Renown Health. She has been passionately supporting innovative business models that seek to fill gaps in community health for nearly a decade.

Claire Berry- Claire has four years of professional experience as an inspiring organic market farmer with City Green Gardens in Northern Nevada and is the former owner/operator of local business, Jack's Auto Repair. Claire is practiced at growing produce as a business enterprise.

Neil Bertrando- Neil has seven years of experience running a regional permaculture design and consulting company, RT Permaculture, and is highly knowledgeable about the challenges of successful farming in the Great Basin climate.

Jolene Cook- Jolene is the former General Manager of the Great Basin Community Food Coop (GBCFC) and currently is an independent nutritional consultant focusing on supporting healthy families in the Reno/Sparks area. She is also the current Wellness Department Manager at the GBCFC.

Melissa Nixon- Melissa is currently a graduate student at the University of Nevada, Reno and studies the creation and maintenance of local food systems through the lens of social science methodologies. She is the former Human Resources Coordinator for the Great Basin Community Food Coop and has 10 years of experience in community organizing and natural food retail management.

Appendix B



Our preferred location is the northeast corner of Betsy Caughlin Donnelly Park adjacent to Marberry Drive.

Appendix C

Urban agricultural programs are enhancing communities in cities all over the nation. The links below connect to some of the diverse examples of public/nonprofit partnerships that have inspired PI.

Denver Urban Gardens

<https://dug.org/>

<http://groundworkcolorado.org/areas-of-service/food/urban-farming-programs/>

<http://theurbanfarm.org/>

Detroit Urban Agriculture & Michigan Urban Farming Initiative

<http://www.miufi.org/>

Phoenix Urban Farm

<http://www.rooseveltrow.org/about/programs/a-r-t-s/growhouse/>

Portland Urban Food Program

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/53834>

<https://zengerfarm.org/>

<http://farm.conservationdistrict.org/2014/status-report-on-beavercreek-farm.html>

Richmond, VA Urban Farm

<http://shalomfarms.org/>

Salt Lake City Urban Farming

<http://slco.org/urbanfarming/>

Sacramento Urban Agriculture

<https://www.cityofsacramento.org/Community-Development/Planning/Long-Range/Urban-Agriculture>