

Dear Community,

We had an amazing turn-out at the public meeting in support of Camas Commons. Thank you to all who showed up, those who spoke in favor, and those who sent us messages of support and encouragement before, during & after from those who couldn't be there. Trust me when I say. We FEEL you. The power of people is REAL. WOW! We're riding the momentum into the next phase.

The Land Bank has an extensive approval process. We respect it and are working with it as they are with us. We are in preliminary negotiations with the Land Bank and on track for selection!

Early on, after meeting with a potential donor about our vision, he said "this land is clearly important to you, and you are important to the land." It was the most seen I've ever felt by a stranger about mine and Guisepi's relationship to this place and our commitment to it. I responded saying, "this is an exceptional land and deserves an exceptional vision."

This is what I have learned in being connected to Talking Horse Ranch for sixteen years. It's the place that first taught me how to grow food when I showed up on the island at 26-years-old. It's an incredible gift to have returned to this land, now in my 40's, to be at the precipice of being able to pay that forward to aspiring youth looking for the same opportunity with an added bonus of offering security of land and home as well.

It's time to share a little about our journey thus far...

"This land is meant to be shared," is what the owner said when he first told us the news that the farm was going to be sold to the Land Bank, and so believed we could have a real shot at it. We had been in talks about the future vision of the farm for a few years with him, so he knew what our dreams and goals were and also the potential for it to work out. We literally jumped for joy dancing around our living room after the call.

Although we knew then there was still a long road ahead, and much was uncertain, we find ourselves here today as the only qualifying proposal for this land! The Land Bank's proposal requirements ensured the 40 acres be maintained as an active working farm, which included providing farming experience, a farm plan, and goals for how to contribute to our local food system. This was a huge gesture to farming in our community and commitment to their [agricultural policy](#) in action.

So here we are, **the only proposal on the table** and your support and contributions help keep us here to ensure the entire 120 acres becomes preserved, permanently – with our 40 acres as an active working farm, which also enables the possibility for us to lease the middle 40-acre parcel ensuring that it continues in agriculture as well. Given the Land Bank's willingness to understand the historical value of this land as an active working farm, we are excited for the potential so that more primary farmland isn't lost in this sale.

Guisepi and I have come to love and know the farm as a whole body of land. Although most people think in 'parcels,' land stewardship thinks in relationships. The thought of the 40 acres falling to a private buyer who has had no connection to it, or only sees it as an investment property where it will remain in real-estate simply because they had the top-dollar amount, while the rest gets put in preservation makes me incredibly sad. The whole land deserves to be preserved as an interconnected living body of intricate natural and infrastructural systems that support one another. Our 40-acres has a large swath of Camas (hence our name-sake) growing around and behind our house that follows a rocky ridge surrounded by a magical Madrona forest. We stand to protect this space alongside the Camas that grows further down the road along the trail that the Land Bank will be protecting. Our mission-aligned values enable us to work as neighbors to ensure one of the oldest, largest, historic farms on the island remains one, permanently protected for islanders now and into the future beyond our generation.

We are not out of the woods on this yet. As mentioned, there's an extensive approval process underway and we're in the midst of it now. Our success depends on our community investment.

We would've been at our goal a while ago, actually. But we've learned something about fundraising that we weren't anticipating. What we've found from folks who had \$100,000+ to "give", they all wanted something in return - taking away from our mission of trying to provide affordable land and homes for young farmers. At times we were pressured to bend as the insecurity of our housing was used and the money was dangled. This was never just about our home. It's about this farm remaining a community asset, beyond us, beyond our lifetime.

We said NO.

We found this pattern to be strange, while the majority of contributors who on average gave \$100, \$500 and \$1,000, simply wanted to give as a gift to help support the vision. They understand the lasting legacy of what we're trying to accomplish *now*. What we realized is that the 3 key things we are aiming to meet for our community do not touch those folks who seemed "open to giving" large sums, and were actually looking for a real-estate

investment. Many of them already own 2 or more homes, and either don't live here at all, or only part-time. They all wanted to *own* more. The vision didn't compute for them. One even wanted to split the land, own the big barn and the other house, taking away important infrastructure that provides for all the farming operations here into the future. It also took away the home that is move-in-ready for potential young farmers that are waiting for the opportunities we are trying to create open up.

Those that had more, wanted more. Those that have less actually gave more – because it's been a *true* gift.

Whether the donation was \$20, \$2,000 to \$25,000 or \$50,000, the folks that are actually contributing see the long term investment we are providing for the community as a whole, beyond themselves. The real gift that keeps giving.

We don't want to believe what we've found about higher-dollar “donors” is a concrete truth. Our hope is that it was simply circumstantial given the timeline and all we had to do within it so quickly, which didn't quite click for these people, yet. We've been told from the beginning that this community is supportive in words, but not in funds, and there was no way to raise the funds we need by community connections alone. *We don't buy this.* We believe in this community and it's why we are here.

At this time, we are curious if there are folks out there willing to give \$100,000+ to help make Camas Commons a reality from the place that so many others so generously have. We believe there are and welcome them to join in this pivotal moment to support something that aims to meet a number of island needs that are long over-due. So we don't lose this opportunity to create an exceptional vision. One that breathes life into being *the exception*, to give pathways to a new norm in order to meet the needs of the time. A gift that extends throughout time by the decisions we make today. This is legacy giving where true philanthropy is rooted. This is thinking beyond a single generation and our children being born today. We call in more forward thinkers to join us.

Things aren't looking great for small farmers. Our community, like many all over the country, needs a real boost. Creative solutions, forward-thinking, risk taking and collaborative innovation are key. We're in a time where local organizations need to step-up to create powerful examples to follow into the future. We are in that time. What we do with it will have lasting effects. It's important to feel our decisions matter on the local level. This is real collective power in action.

We are very proud of what's been raised so far with what has felt like emergency funds for our project to try and fruit this vision. The success of being able to offer \$1 million has been

through community connections who understand the essentials Camas Commons is offering in a time when there are no current solutions being put forth to help balance the scales on this island for younger folks to farm *well & securely*. We've been told over and over, "young folks don't want to work." Young folks need opportunities provided, and it's the role of us older folks to do so. That's how Guisepi and myself see ourselves in this as we joke that we'll probably be the oldest farmers on the land.

We've been told that there's a full cash back-up offer waiting in the shadows who will most likely put a gate up if this Land Bank purchase doesn't go through. To that, we say that there are 20 & 30 somethings who have been waiting on the sidelines, watching and hoping, for Camas Commons to succeed so the opportunities for their potential success are made available. We are hearing this over and over. Not surprising though, we've known this and it's what helped fuel the vision for Camas Commons. I can't help but think too of the children out there who don't even know yet that they may want to be farming in some capacity someday, and those who do, or have a natural inclination, but haven't realized it into a dream yet.

I met a 7 year old girl this Summer during one of our public goat offerings who had no fear of our goat herd and was a complete natural in her interactions with them. As I watched her interact, she knew exactly when to give them space, guide them to a place, honor their cues, and listen to them in a way I am only just now garnering the experience to hope to teach. Her gift is intrinsic. The girl even walked over to two other little girls who were holding back a bit. One of them was a toddler, the other looked more her age. She kindly asked if they wanted to come with her to pet the goats. They followed her as she confidently walked them over to one of my mama goats and guided them exactly on how to approach them safely, and how to keep a safe space when you're near their horns, and maintain it as they move and how to pet them. I WAS IN AWE. I let her parents know, and they replied, "yeah, she's a natural. She wants to be a farmer some day. Being with animals is all she wants to do. This is a dream of hers to be able to do this today." Imagine if she had the opportunity now to develop it throughout her entire life. This is how true experts get made. My dream of being able to offer little-sister, big sister programs for Animal Midwifery through Women Who Stare at Goats came alive that day as I saw her potential.

We are farmers. Yes, we cannot afford on our own to purchase land to farm at the current values. This is an issue *all over the country*. Your donations & pledges are going to the Camas Commons vision, not purchasing our home. We have our own personal & family funds that are being contributed to buy our house in the acquisition. Each contribution, no matter the amount, we've considered an *angel donation because it just is*. It is helping save a historic farm now, and a future for this island that ensures young people are able to farm, securely, in order to offer greater food security. As our greater infrastructure becomes less

dependable, local farming becomes more essential, even if it doesn't feel that way right now.

Regenerative Farming and our farm vision takes the conditions of today to provide creative solutions for tomorrow. Talking Horse Ranch is the only farm currently that has the essential ingredients to fulfill the vision of Camas Commons for our beloved island community. This is truly a 'seize the moment opportunity' at hand.

The Land Bank has an extensive approval process. **Our next fundraising deadline to reach the next round is November 6th, 2026.** Again, very tight, but out of our control. Time is of the essence to secure Camas Commons for the overall acquisition. We're at the table – help keep us there. We are blazing a trail together and the bushwacking is real.

In order to make an exceptional vision, for this exceptional land, for an exceptional region *a reality*, it takes exceptional people. Forward-thinkers, let's do this!

[Calling in Pledges or Donations](#) – we look forward to celebrating with our community of contributors on the farm under the name Camas Commons in the future.

[Community Foundation Fund - Donations can be made through the CFD portal.](#)

For everyone -- please share the following with anyone you think would be interested in supporting our project. Please cast our net into your communities.

Website: camascommons.org

Video: [Camas Commons - A regenerative Farming Land Trust](#) (Guisepi made it! Beautiful footage of the farm)

To those of you who have already given -- thank you for your foundational gifts that helped us get where we are! If you're able & willing to contribute more, thank you so much for your continued support to save this farm as a community asset.

To those of you still considering -- but waiting to see how it goes, now's the time and we hope you join us! Check-out the giving tree on our website for our donor recognition rewards to choose your adventure!

To those who think you can't – never underestimate the power of the gift, no matter the amount, every gift adds up and contributes to the whole. It really does! We've had days where a bunch of donations come in at once and whether they are \$5, \$20, \$50 or more, as we add them up we are even closer to our goal. Consider 'our group donations' option as

well (view the Giving Garden on website) where folks are pooling money together. We've already had a few of those and it's fun to see what people call their donor groups.

WHAT YOUR FUNDS HELP DO: A COMMUNITY SUPPORTED FARM (CSF)

- + Help keep this farm from falling into the hands of a private buyer who doesn't know it or sees it only as an investment property or private bunker.
- + Help secure affordable land access and housing opportunities for young, aspiring farmers on the island waiting for these opportunities to exist. They are out there. They just need the opportunities. We are doing our best to create a path to provide them.
- + Ensure the 40 acres we inhabit also gets preserved alongside Land Bank's 80 acres.
- + Ensures land access and homesites stay affordable for our young farmers: current buy-ins are set at \$50K in the current funding plan (including anticipated donations and loan repayment). The more money we have to pay for the land, the less affordable it is for farmers. At the Land Bank's current presumed asking price of \$1.45M, we'd have to raise our buy-ins to around \$150-\$200K – not affordable. Help us keep it at \$50K!
- + Reduce debt. The more money we owe, the longer we go without establishing the land trust. The land cannot enter a land trust for conservation until the debt is paid.
- + Helps transition this farm to Regenerative Agriculture to start restoring soil health and lead to higher quality food and greater production, without depleting the soils.
- + Contributes to Indigenous land tax: funds set aside for supporting Indigenous-led events, education and accessibility.
- + Helps ensure more food is produced on our island, offering more food security.

If you're interested in seeing our proposal, it's on our website and if you have any questions be sure to see our FAQ section to see if we answer it there first.

With love for community burning in our hearts, the trail is being blazed,

Ally (and Guisepi)
camascommons.org