

Illinois Yearly Meeting Campus Conceptual Development Plan

Environmental Concerns Committee

April 16, 2011

Respectfully submitted by Noel Pavlovic, Clerk

The Environmental Concerns Committee (ECC) is concerned about the holistic planning for the Illinois Yearly Meeting Campus (ILYMC) because our ongoing and future work is dependent on that vision. For example we have had recent requests for memorial trees, but cannot proceed unless we have a clear vision where they might grow. In that interest, the ECC developed the following conception for the future ILYMC as an island refuge for wildlife and the spirit. This concept plan is based on two years of seasoning, in spoken, written and drawn form, and was discerned during a sharing session on April 16 in the dining room of the Clear Creek House (CCH). We believe there should be more habitat for wildlife on our island refuge, just as the Meeting House is a refuge for our spirits. We provide below a general temporal and spatial conception of the site, between the ILYM Meeting House and the west end of the property, not including the campground across Quaker Lane. We propose that the projects be initiated in the following order.

1. As a first phase, we believe that the long shed needs to be removed, and the building and materials to be recycled. We believe that the removal will create a visual and spiritual view shed between the Clear Creek House (CCH) meeting for worship room and dining room and the Illinois Yearly Meeting House (ILYMH). Much of the space opened up by the removal of the long shed would create an alternate recreation space for young Friends that would be utilized when worship, meetings for business, or lectures in the ILYMH necessitated quiet periods on the main recreational front lawn.

We were less clear about whether the shop at the west end of the long shed should be retained or removed, since it has utilities running to it, and could be a useful work or storage space. We conceive that if the shop were removed, the concrete slab could be retained with the possibility of using it for a small open pavilion, consisting of a roof over the slab, supported by pillars or posts. While preserving views in all four directions, it would provide an outdoor space protected from sun or rain, for eating or activities. This would be on the south portion of the slab, to maintain the view from the CCH dining room to the ILYMH.

Connecting the CCH with the ILYMH would be a narrow lane connecting the driveway loops, suitable for pedestrians and also along which an electric golf cart or carts could transport Friends in need

between each location. This lane would be south of the existing long shed.

The large silver maple on the east side of CCH should be removed because it is a hazard and it blocks the view shed from the CCH dining room; however, one Friend wishes the tree could be retained.

2. We believe that all the storage and maintenance places and functions could be wisely moved to the area of the machine shed that the local farmer is using and the dairy barn on the west end of the old barn. We recommend that the shed (milk house) in disrepair on the north side end of the dairy barn be removed.

3. We propose that the area west of the current prairie, north of the long shed, and east of the CCH be used to create a Friends Memorial Worship Grove, with trees, sheltered contemplative spots, benches, and meandering trails. Existing nonnative and nuisance tree species would be removed as we develop the specific plans for this space. This would make a green space that extends along the road between the CCH and the ILYMH.

4. To make an environment suitable for wildlife and reduce considerably our mowing of the lawn, we propose a strip of prairie extending westward from the southwest corner of the ILYMH to beyond the southwest side of the old barn. The prairie would then turn right (north) to proceed north on the west side of the property to the paved road. North of the old barn and dairy shed it would expand eastward toward the grain shed and machine shed. The expanded prairie on the north-west portion of the property will provide habitat for meadow larks that have already been seen there. The far west side of the property would be developed into a fence row to define the property edge, provide a wind break, and create edge habitat for wildlife. The prairie on the south end would provide a visual contrast and maintain a view to the Clear Creek watershed and landscape to the south that would not be obstructed by trees.

5. Within the space surrounded by the curved drive west of the CCH we propose three functional components: a) A short grass prairie garden on the south, b) an open-sided picnic shelter in the center, and c) a row of native American plum shrubs along the edge of the paved road. The shelter could serve as a space for gatherings such as memorial services, graduation open houses, etc., that could potentially be available to the local community.

To the south of the loop of the drive and at the existing brush pile, parking spaces could be created to serve the CCH and the future

dormitory. We envision the proposed dormitory could be placed south of CCH and perhaps be connected to it or somewhat to the southeast of it. We would encourage the creation of outdoor “rooms“ between and around the CCH and the dormitory for places of conversation, contemplation, and committee activity. This would consolidate the dormitory functions of CCH and the dormitory in one location for small or large events.

6. The area between the southwest end of the Meeting House and the dormitory that currently includes the old field would be reserved for the future dining hall and kitchen. Actual placement would be determined when further planning is pursued, considering proximity to the Meeting House and utility access as well as other contingencies.

Future plans for YF recreation areas and other suggested items, including a labyrinth, will be developed and placed later. One idea might be to place the labyrinth in the southeast corner of the property adjacent to the Hans Peters memorial blue spruces if ILYM is able to purchase the land to square off that corner.

We were unclear about where additional parking would occur between the ILYMH and the kitchen/dining building, but felt it should be designed to be unobtrusive and tastefully blend into the landscape. We felt if placed towards the north end of the property it should not disrupt the green space developed along Quaker Lane. Overall, we would like to discourage driving and encourage walking once people are at the site.

We hope that Site Envisioning Committee finds this conceptual plan useful and that it will become the catalyst for a plan approved by Illinois Yearly Meeting. Once this or some variation of the concept plan was approved by ILYM, ECC would then proceed with development of the proposed Friends Memorial Worship Grove.