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News

McLAUGHLIN GARDEN GROWINGS ITS PROPERTY AND PROGRAMS

By Erin Place, Staff Writer

Published on Sunday, Nov 6, 2016 at 12:12 am | Last updated on Sunday, Nov 6, 2016 at 12:12 am

PARIS — Demolition and restoration work are underway at McLaughlin Garden & Homestead and the neighboring Curtis House to expand, enhance and connect the two properties.

Roberts Excavation of Norway and JBK Construction of Oxford demolished and removed the damaged ell and deteriorated porch from the Curtis House next to McLaughlin Garden at 97 Main St.

Last winter, a broken pipe flooded the ell and an analysis showed the structure and the porch must be removed before the house can be transformed into an education center.

"We did save about five of the timbers so we can reuse them in the future," McLaughlin Garden Executive Director Donna Anderson said. "...We might be able to move them into the new structure somehow."

Other elements saved for future use on the property include posts, shutters and cedar shingles.

Coinciding with the demolition work is the new roof and restoration of three chimneys on the homestead done by JBK Construction and Larabee Chimney Services of Scarborough, respectively. The project was paid for with funds from the Belvedere Foundation, the Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust and Gifts from the Heart donation drive.

Before winter, the area underneath the ell will become a pollinator meadow. Fill will come later this week and by the end of the month, Director of Horticulture Kristin Perry will ready the new addition to

the garden for spring.

“She will sow. We have to make sure that it is cold enough that the seeds don’t germinate so by next spring hopefully things will be coming up,” Anderson said about Perry.

The “pollinator’s paradise” will add more color to the space, which will support the health of birds and insects, including butterflies and bees. It will feature the garden’s honeybee hives, and is funded through the Gifts From the Heart auction.

Other gardening plans include expanding the pumpkin patch and possibly relocating it. The goal is to grow more pumpkins for the annual Jack-0’-Lantern Spectacular, Anderson said. Since the pumpkins are planted in June, details will be worked out over the winter and shared in the spring with the hope high school students could help for their community service requirement.

As far as the 10-year master plan goes, Anderson said the board of directors and staff interviewed four firms for the project and hired three. They include Richardson & Associates of Saco for landscape design, Barbá + Wheelock Architecture Preservation Design of Portland and Riverside Survey LLC of Harrison.

These businesses are “very creative, very thoughtful and really inspiring to the board and the staff in terms of how we could not just preserve the historic property but enhance it (and) make better use of it.”

The entire team, including the firms, Anderson, Perry and the board, will look at how to fully integrate the Curtis House with the gardens and homestead of Bernard McLaughlin.

The future education center at the Curtis House will allow for more programming and eventually be home to a cafe. They will figure out how to “revitalize the historic garden” and “steering the historic property into the next phase of its evolution in a more thorough way,” Anderson said.

The last time a master plan was done was in 1999, which she said focused on preserving McLaughlin’s vision of his garden. The new master plan will look at how to not only keep the private sanctuary feel of the garden, but make it more accessible to the public.

Surveying happens this week, along with analysis of its results.

“What the surveyors are going to do is really resurvey the land so we know exactly where the boundaries are for our future planning. They might help us recover more of the 19th century history,” Anderson said. “(For the Curtis House) the story is the cape was originally the schoolhouse on Elm Hill and brought down here in 1840. That structure predates this house and the barn.”

She noted the surveyors have done a lot of work in the area and know how the lots were laid out in the early 1800s. With the odd shape of the Curtis House and McLaughlin Garden lots, it only makes sense

that they were once one property.

The master planning will take place through the remainder of the fall and winter. Some details should be shared, including approved drawings sometime after the first of the year, Anderson said, and the entire plan should be complete by April.

“We spent so much time talking with the community about what they wanted over the last couple years – we really have a clear sense of their priorities (and will) incorporate into the plan what will work for us,” she said.

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GOING DOWN — The damaged ell and deteriorated porch at the Curtis House, next door to McLaughlin Garden & Homestead, were demolished over the weekend as master planning for the two sites gets underway.



MAKE WAY — The recently demolished ell and porch at the Curtis House in Paris will make way for a pollinator meadow. McLaughlin Garden Director of Horticulture Kristin Perry will plant by the end of the month so it can blossom next spring.