



# SAN JUAN ISLAND GRANGE

No. 966



P.O. Box 691  
Friday Harbor WA 98250  
July 23, 2007

*The soil is the source from whence we derive all that constitutes wealth, without it we would have no agriculture, no manufacturers, no commerce. Of all the material gifts of the Creator, the various productions of the vegetable world are of the first importance. The art of agriculture is the parent and precursor of all arts, and its products, the foundation of all wealth.*

## Preamble, Grange Constitution of the Order

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the Grange:

The values and goals expressed in the preamble inspired us to join the San Juan Island Grange and to serve as officers, committing our time, energies, skills, and enthusiasm to further these ideals in our community. As members and volunteer officers we have sought to both promote and preserve our local agricultural heritage. Many times during regular Grange meetings, members asked: "What can we do to help our agricultural community?"

In February, 2006 a large group of Grange members participated in a day-long visioning and goal-setting workshop for the purpose of developing an updated Mission Statement and a set of goals, projects, and activities for the next several years. After a few months of revision and discussion among the members, our mission emerged and was adopted:

### Mission Statement

*The San Juan Island Grange #966 is dedicated to fostering an environmentally sound and economically vital agricultural community in the San Juans. Through advocacy, education and marketing support we work toward greater food security, more land in food production, a supportive regulatory environment, more successful farmers and preservation of our agricultural heritage. We continue our long tradition of providing a community hall for meetings, celebrations and performances. We are a fraternal organization open to all who are interested, with roots in the rural and agricultural history of this community and nation. We serve and support our members and the community through our programs that focus on legislation, community service and family activities and fellowship.*

Of all the projects and activities proposed during the February workshop, the idea that garnered the most enthusiasm and support was the conversion of the Grange's Spring Street property to a use that better supported our mission. We envisioned an agricultural and commercial center that would provide monthly income to the Grange as well as a permanent, year-round home for the San Juan Farmers Market. In September 2006 planning for this project, in the form of a feasibility study, was unanimously approved.

Since then a vocal minority of members has made it impossible for officers and committee members to conduct Grange business. The repetition of half-truths, innuendo, character assassination and outright deception both in the Grange Hall and behind the scenes has made business meetings extremely frustrating and uncomfortable for the membership. Many members have expressed such dismay that they have stopped attending meetings, and others may be driven away for fear of being caught up in the fray.

We gathered to present our ideas to the Washington State Grange, but were met with vague instructions along with threats of dire consequences should we not follow their murky directives. As officers we sought advice and clarification from the State Grange, to no avail. As a result, we determined to act in accordance with Grange by-laws, national, state, and local. The State Grange has been extremely unsupportive of our efforts to conduct local Grange business and carry out our mission in support of local agriculture.

Even if we were to reach an accommodation with the few determined members who have prevented us from acting in any effective capacity, we still have no guarantee that the State Grange leadership will allow us to make our own decisions for our own Grange community. We, as volunteer officers of the San Juan Island Grange, are no longer willing to participate in this organization, either as members or officers. We are resigning from Grange membership.

Those of you in the Grange who joined in the expectation that Grange would follow its mission statement and adhere to its adopted vision, goals, activities, and projects, may wish to reconsider your membership.

This has been an incredibly difficult decision to make, and we regret that we have been unable to curtail the efforts of this small group of members determined to subvert the will of the majority supporting the Grange's agricultural mission and efforts to determine the feasibility of converting the Spring Street property to a use that meets this mission. In addition, we regret that some of you may feel that we've let you down. However, too much of our time and effort has been spent trying to surmount on-going contention and hostility, not to mention serious obstacles, and we have come to see that what we truly want to do, instead, is spend our energies in the service of local food and agriculture.

We have enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interact with so many fine people, and to make lifelong friendships through the Grange. Therefore, it is with sorrow, regret, and dismay that we send this letter of resignation to you.

Fraternally yours,

Jim Sesby, Master, San Juan Island Grange #966  
Roger Ellison, Overseer  
Layne Sundberg, Lecturer, Executive Committee  
Nancy Larsen, Assistant Steward, Executive Committee  
Cindy Gauthier, Treasurer  
Jane Burton Bell, Secretary  
Bruce Gregory, Executive Committee