



MEMORANDUM

TO: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Task Force

FROM: Dan Jochum

DATE: October 9, 2006

RE: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan
Task Force Meeting #8 Summary
SEH No. A-WRIGH0601.00

The following document summarizes the eighth Task Force meeting for the Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan; it is not meant to be a complete record of discussions which took place, but rather a summary of the various topics and issues raised and discussed.

Date of Event: Monday October 9, 2006, 9:00am – 11:30am

Location: Wright County Government Center

Attendees:

Donald Schmidt (Task Force member)	Stacy Arp
Greg Eckblad (Task Force member)	Bill Warner
Gordon Weber (Task Force member)	Tom Perrault
Tom Salkowski (Task Force member)	Steve Grittman
Shannon Bye (Task Force member)	Delores Setula
Judy Weldele (Task Force member)	Scott Deckert
Nancy Carswell (Task Force member)	Dan Jochum, SEH
Jeff O'Neill	
Luke Johnson	Tom Zins
Marc Wiegler	Rick Berens
Mary Wetter	Joe Jacobs
Ray Schmidt	Danno Mahoney
Tom Perrault	Franklin Denn

Introductions

- Dan Jochum kicked off the meeting with an introduction of the consultants present and asked each meeting attendee to introduce themselves (see above).
- Jochum discussed the purpose of the meeting, which was to discuss policies relevant to the land use plan.

Discuss Policies for Land Use Plan

II. Discuss Plan Outline

- A. To follow current (1988) LUP organization
- B. Policies and implementation is the focus of today's meeting

III. Future Land Use Plan Discussion

A. Jochum - Future LUP Map is put on hold to look at overall input and meet with staff and cities to get a better draft map. Then we will take that map to the Townships to see if they feel there should be any changes. At our November meeting, we should have the newly revised LUP map to present.

B. Tom S. - Met with city of Rockford and Hanover and will be meeting tonight with the City of Buffalo to gather input to help draft a new LUP Map to present to Township. The Buffalo City Planning Commission meeting is tonight at 7:00 p.m.

IV. Goals and Policy Discussion (handout #1)

A. Jochum - Themes from previous meetings have been categorized and we created new goals from those categories.

B. Specific Policies Discussion:

Comment - Concerned about wording in document page 2. Dan – This wording was taken from the SWOT analysis from the public meeting (we won't be using this exact wording in the actual plan)

Jochum – Goals are to customize these items; some were taken literally from the public meeting.

Comment – would like to see open space/green space more extensively in goals.

Tom S. – Concerns will be reflected more when we analyze this in detail, especially when we go through the policies more in depth.

Comment – Questions the 1988 plan; hasn't it changed and now isn't it for development?

Tom S. - stated previously it was primarily focused on preserving Ag. land.

Comment – is concerned that goals seem to say the same thing as the old plan. TS – we are here to determine if they are still valid.

Jochum – Policy statements will speak to this more.

Comment – Worried about incompatible LUP's between city and township; the two not meshing.

Comment – Questioned what is prime Ag. land?

Tom S. – protecting “rural area”, not just “prime farmland”. Policy needs to differentiate between just “prime” farmland and farmland/Ag. land. We shouldn't just be thinking about soils.

Comment – Land is not well suited anymore for “farming”. Size and type of land are not worth it.

Tom S. – Ag does not mean whoever grows the most bushels per acre; maybe we should say “rural” areas with lower densities.

Comment – Worried about seeing marginal farms growing up in neglect. “ Open space” is a clouded vision of what it actually is.

Tom S. – Most farmers probably have alternative jobs and cannot survive on only 80 acres for a farm. He agrees with that aspect. There has been discussion on smaller divisions such as 1 per 5, 1 per 10, and 1 per 20 for Ag land.

Comment - Agrees that 1 per 40 is not economically feasible.

Comment – Cannot even rent out land to farmers to make it worthwhile. Do we need to rally around the townships to have our voice heard? How do we get OUR voice heard?

Tom S. – Attend public hearings; let the Town board know your concerns. You may find, however, that all your neighbors do not agree with you.

Comment – So much has changed in 18 years and he doesn't believe that all his neighbors really know what is going on.

Comment – in favor of Ag Preserve but concerned about marginal land not being utilized for development. He feels that public meetings should be an open forum and we cannot speak publicly on paper. Does not like how meetings are run. How is that a public meeting?

Comment – Concerned if the 1 per 20 as AG land has been looked at.

TS – No we don't have a new zoning district that allows this (1 per 20). After we develop where these areas could be located then we will define what Ag is and the density.

Comment – Thinks definitions might help the situation now and will help determine what we plan as AG versus not AG land.

Tom S. – this plan has been reviewed by the Townships since and has been amended numerous times since the original plan in 1988.

Jochum – Dan believes a lot of the current policy has a lot of information that we will carry over because it is a good plan with pertinent policies.

Comment – Wants to reiterate the “marginal land” issue. Input from public meetings say their input didn't get heard and put in the minutes. (Claim their ideas were on the maps- Dan will check on this)

Comment – Would like to look at tax base and relate that to how we zone some of these areas. Landowners have different mindsets that they did before cause of development pressures. May help to have straight forward zoning districts. Instead of trying to pick certain areas out. May be more “overall zoning” instead of area specific.

Franklin Denn – There is a direct clash of population. Some that wants to develop and some that doesn't. He wants to define “marginal land” better. He would like to keep farming but if we start overpopulating this becomes more difficult. If we start intermingling all this development into Ag. areas then it is no longer Ag.

V. Major Goals (handout #2) – the following goes in order of handout

1. To make the most efficient and economical use of public funds and investments:

A. Tom S.- Goals and Policy statements are used by the BOA and the PC to make cases at hearings.

Tom S. – sewer and water are most expensive services; Sheriff responding is also an expense.

Zins – Feedlots sometimes go into developmental areas and are not necessarily welcomed.

B. Comment – Concerned about verbage of letter “B”.

Jochum –land uses that are more major users (services) should be located in cities.

Tom S. – Industrial also included in cities.

C. Tom S. – need to add to this portion (“C”). See handout from Carver County on transition areas (we call major growth areas), which are next to cities and correspond to OAA's. What do we do with growing cities? We need to do something to cut down costs when it does get annexed (prepare for it).

Comment – Are we developing a policy or ordinance to control this?

Tom S. – We would like to see OAA's or something similar so they work together, something like major growth area etc.

Tom S. – There are going to have to be more policy or standards for areas around cities.

Jochum – We will want to develop implementation policies for these areas (more action oriented).

Comment – School districts land, such as Buffalo, have nothing in the ordinance about their development.

Tom S. – Went to meetings and didn't see that coming either. State of MN controls this and also the city of Buffalo agreed to run sewer and water out there. So there was at least 2 parties involved in this decision.

D. Roads are also very expensive

No comments

E. We don't allow private roads. The city and township agree on this.

Comment – still wondering why not private roads? Township reps responded that it is not up to twp. specs if it is private and we (the twps) have almost always taken over the roads, so there should not be any issues with this.

F. No Comments

Section #1 Overall Comments:

Comment – thinks there should be a policy on schools. Tom S. agreed that they would work on this for next meeting.

2. To provide a wide range of opportunity for urban and rural development:

A. Comment – if we have run out of land – is that reasonable for annexation?

Tom S. – What is a reasonable amount of land? 20 years out? 100 acres of land? What defines that?

Comment – We had to be able to plan for an area jointly with the Township.

Comment – It's vague and hard to pin down but cities need to plan out; for instance 20 years out.

Comment – Twps feel urgency that when they get annexed they lose their tax base.

Comment - It will take a lot of time to erode that tax base. It is not like we annexed all of the land right away. It gives the Twp time to alleviate some of those issues.

Jochum – At the public meeting people wanted to maintain rural environment. For now and in our lifetime there will be townships.

Tom S. – Twps have interest because they are concerned that development will be let loose and we will turn into a “Maple Grove”. We want to preserve a rural area so we aren't one big city. There is controversy on what rural is but the consensus is that we all want rural to be preserved. Now what we are preserving is up for debate. (is preserving rural mansions or green space?)

Comment – Future – what is the definition of this?

Tom S. – That is what we are doing here is to define this. We have to push Cities and Twps to come to an agreement what the area around the Cities is, and what is it going to be. Is it going to be as far as the current sewer system will take you and then it will stop? But what about the landowner on the edge who can make more money by being annexed? How far do we go? The principal of staying a small town is what they want but how do we make that work? Where is the line/wall drawn?

Comment – previous Albertville Mayor – they decided Albertville has a wall already. They cannot grow anymore but they have a balanced tax base so they believe they are good.

Comment – Thinks the “wall” can be built and the City and County can work together to build that “wall”. Wants to include a statement that the County supports the OAA's and they (the County) manage this area together.

Comment – Concerned that when administration changes the outlook will change.

Tom S. – City deserves some assurance on what is going to happen and the Township also needs assurance that there are not going to be developments popping up all over through the City annexing property.

Tom S. – County is a party to 2 OAA's. There is a system set up to work on these agreements.

Comment – City asked Twp of Rockford residents if they want to be annexed instead of residents asking for it. So it goes both ways.

Comment - Give and take and we are all secret right now.....We need to work together more.

B. Chapter 4 is the maps

Tom S. - When there is a plan adopted the County will stick to the plan.

Comment – Would like a policy having the County serve as a neutral facilitator to help with boundaries and enforcement.

3. To protect AG lands from encroachment by incompatible land uses:

A. Tom S. – When the plan was done there were areas around us where there was much controversy over things like farming after dark ...etc. County Board supports the Ag. industry and will not adopt rules that restrict normal farm practices.

B. Tom S. – Discussion will never end on this topic. Is Ag. the thing to call these areas? Not sure? Farming is still a very active part of the County. Tom believes this area needs work.

C. Program is still there – needs tweaking at state level

Tom S. – may need some change in wording. In areas where you are not going to develop you might as well take the tax credit, but its not there to “entice” people.

Comment– questioning 1 per 20 again for AG.

Jochum – need to still define what Ag is or do we need to add another district that is 1 per 20?

Tom S. – doesn’t think of Ag as 1 per 20 but maybe it is called something else.

Comment – “County is forbidding uses”

Tom S. – “uses” as defined by the tax system is different. Discrepancies with the tax system should have been addressed a long time ago.

Tom S. – we are forbidding “uses”. Industrial areas should be in a defined area...etc.

Tom S. – What rural is will always be an argument.

Comment – Goal #1 is to provide services. If you are developing in rural areas then services may not be efficient to serve those areas.

Tom S. – There is an analysis on how many houses could go in a twp as a 1 per 40. You would be amazed at how many homes have not been utilized. There is a lot of development left out there still with our current 1 per 40.

Comment – TDR – have we looked into that further?

Tom S. – not really. Maybe down the line somewhere.

Comment – (farmer) police come out to our farm cause of the noise from our tractors, etc. A person who moved out there should know that these things happen in Ag. areas.

D. Tom S. – If there is an Ag area don’t plop 30 houses there.

COmment – Can you have an assortment of uses in one area? Clustering of homes and have land that is good farmland?

E. No comment

4. To protect, preserve, and enhance the quality of the natural environment, and require development to take place in a manner, which makes wise use of northeastern Wright County’s resources with our degradation:

A. Comment – Cannot drain wetlands to farm them.

SWCD – Cannot drain to develop either. There are drainage laws that are state and federal (not county) which are used to maintain what we have; buffer some of the marginal areas. We are not looking to say we cannot farm but there are restrictions on this industry just like any other industry.

Comment – What about Green Mountain Lake? Is there going to be a buffer?

Tom S. – designated as resource land in a previous discussion about preserving some of these areas. Nothing has been defined yet.

Jochum – people have brought up that we want to preserve some of these natural resources. That is why it was on the map.

B. Mounds are standard now so we will have to change that language.

C. No Comment.

D. Tom S. – There are areas in the plan that 2nd tier residential has been allowed on lakeshore. Where there is AG we have not allowed 2nd tier development.

E. No Comment

F. Tom S. – Water and runoff are more and more important every year. Quantity and Quality.

No other comments

H. Comment – Commenting on PUD and where/why we try to preserve Ag areas. Preserving woods/wetlands vs. Ag = Ag seems to trump Big Woods and wetland previously. Is there a way to look at a scope to preserve some of these other areas?

Tom S. – If we are going to save woods, Ag, and wetland – then we are done.

Only in A/R or residential areas are PUD's allowed. What are we better saving.... woods or Ag? It is a case-by-case scenario with the Planning Commission. Very rarely is the PC completely the driving force on what is being proposed. It is the landowner and the developer. Most Value – home in the trees seems to be overwhelming.

Comment – When we are for a PUD we need to get what we can out of it. We try to save what we can on a case-by-case basis.

Jochum – We will be working on specific resources with our maps in the future; so there will be language that will speak to this.

I. No comments

5. To enhance the strength of the Northeastern Wright County economy by supporting local industry and attracting quality jobs, enhanced tax base and new capital to the region.

Tom S. – this is a brand new goal and we will need to revise some wording and policies.

Tom S. - wants to add what type of economic development is appropriate for these areas. We are running into a lot of start up businesses (home extended business). We will have some new industrial areas developing as well. We need to work on aesthetics in these areas and how we incorporate these into our areas is important. We need to enhance the ability of having average wage jobs and quality jobs for our community.

Comment – Would like a transition zone for some of these start up businesses because they don't have the finances to go to the industrial areas.

Tom S. – This is a common complaint that people cannot afford to move into ind. and comm. areas. Tom agreed that we need something in between for these small businesses that fit in your back yard until they outgrow your back yard. Then they need to go to the ind. and comm. areas.

Tom S. – Concerned with having junk cars and large pole sheds aligned in one area is not what we want. But we need some area for these smaller businesses.

Weber – Rural/Ag areas should have the freedom to start up a business. This is essential to allow citizens their small businesses. It may irritate some people but they should have the same freedom as a farmer.

6. To make improvements to the transportation system that balance travel, desired land uses and environmental factors by facilitating movement to and from regional highway facilities and support current and planned land use patterns.

** This new goal came out of Rockford Town Hall Public meeting.

A-E. Jochum – These are more general policies

Comment - Some cities have done a transportation plan.

Jochum – we have that plan and will be looking at it.

Tom S. – there is also a Highway 55 Corridor plan that will be used.

Overall comments from the meeting:

Tom S. – the tough part of this process is the maps and definitions. These will be addressed in the next couple of meetings.

Tom S. – Tom is working with the smaller cities to try to establish realistic growth boundaries.

Tom S. – This process is going to take longer than we thought, but we'd rather it be done right.

Next Steps

** Next meeting is November 6, 2006 at 9:00 a.m. at the courthouse. There will be discussion on the actual Land Use Plan Map at this meeting.