



Office of
PLANNING AND ZONING

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TO: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Task Force

FROM: Stacy Arp

RE: Wright County Northeast Quadrant Land Use Plan Task Force Meeting #10 Summary

Date of Event: Monday December 4, 2006, 9:00am – 11:30am

Location: Wright County Government Center

Attendees:

Task Force Members: Gordon Weber, Shannon Bye, Franklin Denn, Nancy Carswell, Donald Schmidt, Judy Weldele, Greg Eckblad, Ken Felger, Steve Grittman, Marc Weigle

Staff: Dan Jochum (SEH), Tom Salkowski, Stacy Arp, Scott Deckert, Barry Rhineberger, Tom Zins (County Attorney)

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

Introduction

Salkowski reviewed what staff would like to accomplish today:

- Complete review of major policies for the text portion of the plan
- Review the Aggregate Resources area policies
- Review any outstanding issues from past discussions
- Set a meeting later in January, plan to have a draft plan to review by then

Felger asked for time to make a presentation during the meeting and Salkowski agreed to make time for Mr. Felger.

Rural Policy Areas

Salkowski and Jochum introduced the handout entitled "Policy Discussion: Rural Areas and Cities" for review today. The agenda items are included in this document, though in different order. The first part of this summary follows that document.

There were no comments or objections to the primary Goal, Objectives and introduction to "Rural Area Service and Development Policies".

Rural Area Policy 1: Principal Use

All agreed that the word "permitted" should be changed to "allowed" in sentences 2 and 3.

Felger asked if there is a map of the "rural area"; Jochum explained that these are more general policies applying to the entire township areas.

Rural Area Policy 2: Residential Land Uses

Weldele asked about the status of allowing “2 per 40” in the Agricultural areas. Salkowski noted that would be discussed later in the meeting.

Rural Area Policy 3: Other Land Uses

There was discussion about commercial/industrial development in rural areas, and Gritman voiced a concern that such areas can become an eyesore on the edges of cities if not properly regulated. The County does not have detailed standards for appearance, screening, building type, etc. that are comparable to city standards for commercial/industrial development. Some types of businesses (contractors, landscapers, etc.) may need more land area and less services than are typically available and/or affordable in urban commercial/industrial parks. Weber asserts that the County needs to provide more room and flexibility for some commercial development in the rural areas. There were no changes made to the policy as written.

Rural Area Policy 4: Service and Development Standards

Bullet #1- There was brief discussion on the impact city development can have on township roads, and the purpose of different road classifications. Also discussed road standards and the pros and cons of negotiating standards depending on the nature and location of development proposals. No change to draft recommended.

Bullet #2- Weigle asked if the County allows private roads, Salkowski answered no. No change to draft.

Bullets #3-7 Salkowski asked that all note the last item regarding “community septic systems” especially. Bullet #4 needs to be clarified as it can be read more than one way. No other changes were recommended.

Resource Area Policies

Resource Land Policy 1: Protection

Felger noted approval of preservation by government purchase from a willing seller. Salkowski noted that all of these areas are currently zoned Agricultural, and Pelican Lake has had a Special Protection Shoreland Zone for many years. No changes recommended.

Resource Land Policy 2: Density

No comments

Resource Land Policy 3: Siting

No comments

Aggregate Area Policies

No objection to narrative. (page 4)

Aggregate Resource Policies 1-5

There was a wide-ranging discussion of several aspects of mining and the proposed Aggregate Area. Salkowski noted the County’s new emphasis on regulating mining and reclamation, and the need for some changes in zoning regulations. Eckbald voiced concerns about the number of mines, especially older ones that have not been reclaimed. Denn pointed out the impact that hauling can have on roads, and the need to carefully monitor and require repair by operators. Weigle stated that St. Michael has treated some mining operations as “interim uses” in order to be able to place an end date on the mine. Schmidt inquired about the “gravel tax” and what those funds can be used to accomplish. Deckert reviewed the limitations on use of the gravel tax

money and the need to change legislation to make it more available for reclamation. Salkowski noted that further study (Policy 5) may involve funding and participation by the industry, as well as the cities and townships of Buffalo and Monticello. No changes to the policies were made.

Cities Policy Area (Pages 6 and 7)

Members were asked to review this section during a short recess, so that it could be discussed as a whole. Grittmann questioned how to define “reasonable” for city growth in Policy 2, but agreed there may not be a better term. Grittmann also pointed out the difficulty of a city committing to a service capacity for the long term, which impacts any city’s ability to agree to long term growth areas with precision. Salkowski noted that this problem may help explain why the original goal of planning to permanently preserve rural areas has been moving toward a plan for the year 2020. Denn started a brief discussion on the need for reform and change in state annexation and planning laws. All agreed that the last bullet item on page 7 should be changed to provide different wording than “extremely limited”.

Presentation by Mr. Felger

Felger made a presentation to the Task Force, summarizing and reviewing a written statement he submitted for the record. (See statement following this summary.)

Salkowski noted that the Rockford Township position rejects most County planning principles, and the County is not interested in participating in the type of development plan proposed. SEH and County staff agree that the new Plan should recommend that Rockford Township incorporate as a City so that the Township can pursue their development goals without having to comply with County plans. Rockford Township’s proposed plan, that the entire Township be open to development of five-acre lots except for a commercial/industrial strip along Highway 55, cannot be justified as part of a County Plan dedicated to the preservation of agricultural and rural areas in Townships. Weber expressed disappointment that some compromise cannot be reached. Zins noted the difficulty of adequately gauging public opinion, which can be influenced by the structure and nature of a meeting such as held by Rockford Township last week. Bye noted that the original meeting to get public input last spring gave very different results than expressed by the current Rockford Township position.

Miscellaneous Items

Weldele and Weber emphasized their concerns that the “2 per 40” proposal not be overlooked. Salkowski reviewed the pro’s and cons, noting concerns about the impact on the rest of the County, and the need to develop a new zoning district to enable such rural density. It needs to be addressed by the County Board, and will not be forgotten. With the possible “transfer of development rights”, aggregate area, and a few other items, further study after the Plan may be needed. Eckblad asked if there will be any more public meetings. Salkowski noted that there will be at least one public hearing by the County Planning Commission, if not more.

Date for the next Task Force meeting was set for January 22, 2007.

MINUTES

I, along with many citizen participants, am disappointed in the failure of the most recent NE Quad minutes and of the last Public Meeting minutes to reflect the true nature and accuracy of discussions. I have fielded many complaints that the views and comments rendered were not placed of record.

The latest NE Quad minutes were sketchy at best, for historical purposes, and to lend credence to this process, I urge improvement in this area.

PUBLIC COMMENT

I understand the constraints of time, but please allow those who have taken the time and public interest to attend these meetings to render comments. Most of you at this table are at your regular jobs or are getting paid to be here. These attending citizens may very well be taking time off from work in hopes that their input will be heard. Their comments are well valued in my mind and their input should not be stifled. Please reconsider allowing time during our meetings for their comments.

In the alternative, I would suggest these proceedings be held at a time and place where at each monthly meeting, public input could be gathered when citizens could attend.

APPEX E.

How much has the County and SEH relied upon 1987 Appx E. to formulate policy? My first observation is that the report is 20 years old. Is this the sole premise for the ag preservation model maintained by W. County? If not what other sources have you used? What ratio of revenue to expense to you subscribe to?

Looking further, my observations about Appx .E. are:

There is more recent info.

The 20 year old 1987 Study was conducted in Loudoun, Va. Home to Wash-Dulles Int'l Airport.

Loudoun Co. is within Wash D.C. metro area.

Loudoun Co. is world headquarters to many internet and high tech companies.

\$1mm homes sprouting up throughout the country side.

August, 2006, highest income in the nation.

Fifth largest school system in the nation.

How is this region of the country comparable to W. Co.?

Has anyone further checked out the American Farmland Trust? Their mission is to preserve prime farm land, we don't disagree with that. Did you take the steps to identify prime vs. marginal farmland in your designating the T Area?

1987 Study tells me farmland pays 9X too much taxes resulting in a surplus.

Ol Virginny ain't W. Co. and this is now the 21st Century.

If you would have diligently taken further steps, you would find that there are 'closer to home' comparisons: Independence, Lake Elmo and Farmington Mn. Studies.

Point being, This 1987 study is not comparable to our region of the country nor did you take the logical, educated steps, as public servants, to investigate or use updated info. If this is all you can come up with after 9 months, we are disappointed. Why are you are making important policy decisions on outdated, non-comparable data. We would expect more from our policy making "experts".

Acreage Grid

I will speak to R Twp but B & M Twps indicate a similar trend in some designations.

New Ag/Res. 2X increase however, how much already exists as Ag/Res? How much is simply zoning catch up to match it's use. How much is in flood prone areas? In other words what is the net available acreage for Ag/Res? Is this supposed to serve as 'tax base replacement' that we've been harping on for 9 months?

Res Large Lot Disappeared. Along with more comm and ind we were hoping to actually see an increase in the land area bearing this designation. It decreased 18 fold.

Resource Land Whats this? Does this replace our tax base?

Transition So this is where all of our Res Large Lot and some of our existing Ag/Res and Ag went to. *An 18 fold increase* in this designation. The amount of acres in T area is overreaching in its size and scope. It is unrealistic in that it ties up Twp lands having potential for twp rural development. Why so much? I understand this is a draft but there was information available to offer a more reasonable T area. You claim you did not have adequate information to establish the T area, it was your best guess. You had information, for example: In June, NWAC, planner for City of Rockford, responded with a policy statement found in the June NE Quad minutes: 218 acres, (that equates to about 600 homes or units), 218 acres estimated to be annexed by the year 2020, the life of this current LUP study. The City engineer recently stated the current remaining capacity of the sewer plant is 1,700 units. Do the math my friends. At that rate, it will take over 42 years to reach capacity. Does your T area reflect this 200 plus acre attributable to Rockford? No, if split between Rockford and Hanover, 9 times as much land is included in the T area than could be annexed in 15 years.

Comm/Ind No substantial increase, how much is infill? Do you propose that this paltry increase serve as a 'tax base replacement' that we have been begging for over the last 9 months?

Closer examination reveals you are planning virtually nothing to ensure our existence. In summation on this subject, and after 9 months of study, the draft map and accompanying designations are an insult to the process, an insult to the Town Board and the townships' citizens.

Our level of suspicion is now heightened. We suspect, given the County's policy of no rural growth, (11-08-06 handout) growth only in the citys, ag preservation at all costs, that the final outcome will lead to the stagnation and ultimate demise of the townships.

Twp Meeting

In order to gather the views of our citizens, R Twp held a public meeting a week ago with over 200 residents or landowners attending. The Draft plan was presented along with the acreage grid. The floor was opened to the public for questions and comments. Opened up to the public, unlike the NE Quad meetings of late.

In any event, the citizens spoke loudly and clearly. This draft plan is not acceptable. It is an insult. We now have some level of assurance and authority to speak to certain issues before this committee.

A straw poll was conducted to get a reading on what Supervisor Eckblad and I should be presenting to this body on behalf of our citizenry.

Overwhelmingly, our citizens want more Comm/Ind in the twp.

Overwhelmingly, our citizens want a higher res. density, a density ranging from 1 Ac. to 10 Acres across the twp. I repeat, *1 ac to 10 acres*, not just 1:10.

Out of an estimated 150 plus people polled, 5 desired 1:20, 4 for 1:40

Basically, 1:40 is what you are giving us with this current draft plan.

Of the 4 people desiring 1:40 two of them live in Hennepin County.

The citizens rejected the notion of ag preservation, the citizens will not accept negative growth in the twp, and the "open space" philosophy is cast off.

CONCLUSION

You have spurred our township residents into action with what appears to be an *orchestrated* attempt at planning. You ignored those invited to participate: the stakeholders, the property owners, the Town Boards.

Your process has raised the prospect amongst our citizenry that a certain outcome is desired by the County. Your actions have raised our suspicions. Had you come back with a decent draft last month, our citizens meeting of last week may not have occurred. How much more simpler the process could have been.

We are actually pleased that the result of your actions has stimulated citizens' involvement and action.

In our view, the ag preservation theme is an outdated excuse to limit rural development. Even though Ag is a declining activity in R twp, if an individual wants to farm, great, go ahead, we do not propose to interfere with that right.

Further, the County has opined that 1:40 is necessary for on-site septic systems, we disagree, this is absurd. On site systems can work on lots as small as 1 acre depending on soils. If your concern is ground water pollution and the county states 1:40 acres is needed to adequately treat, why do you maintain S-1 designations around lakes, the most sensitive of all environmental areas?

It seems counter-intuitive.

If the 'open-spacers' want to preserve open space at our expense, then pay us.
If the Cities want us to leave our land wide-open, virgin land, then pay us a holding fee.

The Major Goals of the 2006 LUP do not coincide with LUP map and designations.

I generally gauge the progress of my assignments by the thickness of my folder.
In this case I have a bunch of paper w/o measured progress or result.

Submitted by Ken Felger, Township Representative
12-04-2006, for the record

