

Wright County NWQ Aggregate Committee Meeting #1 Summary

March 6, 2008

Attendees:

Committee Members: Brad Arntson, John Jones, Ken Scadden, Tim Ferrell, Phyllis Latour, Joe Holthaus

Staff: Tom Salkowski, Scott Deckert, Stacy Marquardt

Audience: Charlotte Quiggle, Ralph Douglas, Franklin Denn

I. Introductions/Welcome

John Jones - Silver Creek Supervisor - On the Committee to represent the Townships concerns with Aggregate in the Township and he has an interest in the 1 per 20 or 2 per 40 potential.

Brad Arntson – Knife River -Would like to address some issues in the County with gravel and land marks. Stated that Maple Grove is almost out of material and soon all the material in the area is going to have to be hauled in or railed in.

Tim Ferrell – Annandale Rock - Thinks this is a good opportunity to come up with a plan that benefits the public and the aggregate reps. He would like to streamline the process so we are not always fighting.

Ken Scadden – Monticello Township Resident - Size of aggregate area that was proposed may not be right. Property values will be affected. He thought that there were a lot of residences in that area on small parcels and the aggregate area should not have that.

Phyllis Latour – Southside Township - Concerns with property values and proximity to lakes. Would like to see property designated to be mined/aggregate areas on the map. Has interest in the reclamation process and the ability to be able to rebuild on those areas.

Joe Holthaus – Currently has gravel pits on his property and has views on both sides. He is very concerned with the locations of the aggregate areas.

II. Ground Rules

The group adopted the following ground rules:

- Only Committee members are allowed to comment during the meeting.
- Committee decisions are to be made in the meetings.
- Listen carefully to others.
- Help keep the discussions on track.
- Try hard to understand the views of those with whom you disagree.
- It's okay to have friendly disagreements – everyone has a right to his/her view.

III. Goals and Expectations of the Committee

NEQ plan review

We created a Task Force to oversee the plan with two representatives from each Township and one from each city. We used a different strategy this time around because some of the representatives were from the cities and they were not interested in hearing about some of the different Townships (for example the city of Monticello was not interested in hearing about Rockford Township). So we decided to have specific committees to focus on different parts of the plan. Feedback from the committee is going to be used this time for the basis of the plan and the Task Force will be the Planning Commission. We will be regularly updating them so they are not left in the dark. Some of the hot topics from the NEQ were gravel pits and aggregate areas. The state statute requires us to identify these areas and create something to protect the aggregate resources for the future. The mapped area that was created was the major issue at the end of the process when it went before the County Board. They left the policies and language in but lifted the maps for now and wanted to have it further studied and the problems worked through. We need to hone down on what the aggregate resources district means and apply it to the NWQ as well as the NEQ at the end of this process.

Planning Vs. Zoning

Planning is the Comprehensive Plan. We will need to start talking about how to implement this plan which would be Zoning. This would include things like new aggregate regulations. The Comp Plan has an implementation section to allude to regulations that will come at a later time. The Land Use Plan and policies are needed first. We may need to change some of the language in the NEQ plan to accommodate this so it is clear what we are trying to accomplish with the aggregate area.

Committees Role

It is not a voting group. We are trying to reach a consensus. We will use a majority or a minority report if needed. The group is more like a sounding board. We would like you to come up with recommendations that we can all agree on to present. We will be bringing in speakers from the local level to help us determine what we need to change here. But eventually what we are here to do is draw lines on a map. Scadden is concerned with what happens if we draw lines and the city moves in? Can they annex these areas? Salkowski stated inside the transition areas will not be mapped by us so that won't be an issue now but it could happen in the future. They also recognized the importance of gravel. We don't want to make the mistake of building a ton of houses on top of this resource and then the resource is gone (like Buffalo did).

Arntson questioned what is the vision of what these lines mean? Salkowski stated to generalize an area that has the resource, we couldn't get into detail though. We took an area that we knew there was gravel and hopefully will try to come up with the money to do more of an analysis (at a later date) of these areas. Also to note this is an area we shouldn't put a bunch of development that will cause conflict down the road.

History of the NEQ Plan

"Resource Lands" are an environmentally protected area. There are three in the NEQ Land Use Plan currently. We did not think there should be a lot of development in these areas either. Most of it is state or federal land. We all agreed these areas should be protected and hopefully sellers will want to cooperate and sell to the state or federal agencies.

Other issues that arose from the NEQ plan were more development such as 2 per 40 or 1 per 20. Should we have this or not? There were mixed feelings and people on both sides. We try to get as much consensus as we can but the County Board has not given direction on how to handle it right now. We still view it that most growth should be in the cities or where there is sewer and water or city services (such as police).

Goals of Committee

Review NEQ plan and all the aggregate language (do we need to make changes?)

Look at a map – draw lines for the aggregate area.

Talk about the ordinance amendments at the end once 1 and 2 are completed.

Resources to Use

There was a study conducted by the state and the DNR minerals division will be speaking to committee on mining aggregate and why it is a resource that needs to be saved.

Questions

Ferrell was concerned about the three goals and with the ordinance being at the end, the map will be one sided. There will be one side that wants the area bigger and one side that wants that area to be smaller.

Would it be easier to cover some of the regulations/ordinances so people know what these lines mean?

Salkowski answered that discussions on the map will need to translate on how we regulate things. We need to get the Land Use Plan and map done now and will have a different set of rules in the long run inside the aggregate area versus outside the aggregate area. So maybe we need to define pits as long term versus short term pits. Long term pits being inside the lines and short term pits outside. We may need to make some of that clearer but need to get the policies in line so we can change and adopt new regulations. Latour questions if this would be long range versus shorter term and would you look at the depths of the pit especially for future development purposes. Tom answered that would be regulated pit by pit. The reclamation plans show the grade and maybe we should have them show more detail especially in regards to future development.

Arntson stated that you can't always reclaim as you are mining. Some pits go for 10 years.

Latour asked who decides when 10-15 years has gone by and there has been no reclaiming done?

Arntson stated that some pits are grandfathered in and it is hard to get those reclaimed. The new pits will be reclaimed; we have bonds, etc that regulate this. Deckert reeled them back in to the resources topic. The Committee members are also valuable resources. A lot of different perspectives are here at the table.

IV. Handouts

Salkowski talked briefly about the 3 open houses and passed out the surveys and explained the process, not scientific. It does give the Planning Commission a read on what the public thinks. We will be conducting an open house again once we have some more to show the public.

Deckert passed out three resource handouts for the group to look use the Aggregate resources study group from 1993, the State Legislative Task Force from 8 years ago, and the article by USGS managing/protecting aggregate resources

V. What's Next

Deckert outlined what the committee would be addressing during future meetings. This included a review of the summaries handed out, NEQ policies, mapping, potential ordinance amendments and a number of guest speakers. Salkowski also talked a little about the pending court case for denying a permit to Scherber Companies LLC. So we have to go about this carefully.

The next meeting was scheduled for the 1st Thurs of the month (April 3) for the next meeting at 1:30. It was agreed upon to have the meetings the first Thurs of every month and hopefully the process will be completed by the end of the year (about 6-8 meetings).