

Wright County NWQ Water Quality/Natural Resources Committee Meeting #8
Monday, October 13th, 2008

Committee Members Present: James Olsen, Lance Lindstrom, Mark Kampa, Mike Mcnellis, Rose Thelen, Dave Wagner.

Staff Present: Stacy Marquardt, Tom Salkowski, Scott Deckert.

Others: Charlotte Quiggle, Lawrence Bauman, Franklin Denn.

Marquardt thanked those who attended the open house. The feedback was very positive. There were 39 on the sign-in sheet and 13 staff; it appeared that another dozen or so did not sign in. Sixteen written comments were received. Most of the landowners were in favor of the concept, but some were concerned about potential impacts on their land.

-Comment #1 and #2, area #5: This landowners requested that their land be removed. Salkowski talked with this landowner, who is a conservationist, but concerned about increasing land values and taxes. Wagner was confused by this owner's comments; he said that he should be protected from an increased assessment in his property since he's being a conservationist. Salkowski thought he might be concerned about the "green acres" tax changes, which he summarized.

-Marquardt summarized comment #3, area #14a. Two parcels in this area are mostly in agricultural production and the landowners wanted their tracts removed. They also questioned why some land to the north of the area was not included.

-Comment #4, area #2b: The landowners near the 2b area were in favor of being added to the Resource Lands District. They just had questions about the ability to divide their property.

-Comment #5, area #12: This landowner requested information on government funding mechanisms for non-profits. They also questioned if the County was pursuing acquisition of the land in area #15.

-Comment #6, area #3: Landowners in this area requested that their neighbor's land to the south be added to the district, indicating that they had talked to the neighbors and they would approve.

-Comment #7, area #3: Olsen recommended that the Johnson's land be removed from the district, but that the 80 acres to the south be added instead to connect the park. This might have been the original intent and a mapping mistake.

-Comment #8, area #16c: This landowner questioned if the new designation would have an effect on taxes or green acres, and who to contact if they want to sell their land to the public. They also wondered about Indian mounds. Salkowski mentioned that the Historical Society has known sites mapped.

-Comment #9, unmapped area: This landowner wants to be included in the district. Marquardt explained that it's a nice piece of property, but it's not near any of the areas that are included. Salkowski explained that if several neighbors joined him, it might make sense.

-Comment #10, area #5: This landowner requested more information on the designation.

-Comment #11, area #5: This landowner requested to be removed from the district.

Marquardt stated that all the other comments were compliments. Salkowski was surprised by the low turnout, but appreciated those who came and the input they gave. Every landowner and township and city were notified, so there should be no claims of surprises later in the process.

Marquardt explained that there were many questions on area #2c and why it was isolated and still included. It was initially connected via the gravel pit with the areas to the south, but when the gravel pits were removed from the proposed resource lands, this piece became isolated.

Wagner mentioned he spoke with a landowner in area #9, who wants to talk with an adjacent landowner. He wasn't upset about the proposal, but he wanted more time and information. Thelen questioned why some owners wanted out. Following was a general discussion on the philosophy and thoughts about the program, and if the committee should be concerned if some of the areas are removed, as requested. In area #5, Kampa mentioned that much of the land along the river would still be included, even if some lands are removed. Wagner suggested it is important to let the landowners know the plan will have some flexibility, and can be changed by future County Boards.

Marquardt asked all members to express their opinions on actions to take in light of the open house. Lindstrom thought if landowners wanted out, they should be removed. The ones that want in should only be included if it makes sense with the rest of the plan. Olson agreed. Kampa thought they should be removed if that was their desire, but that the ones that wanted in should be allowed in, no matter what. McNellis agreed.

Salkowski offered a caution that we should maintain a rational basis for our map, and not simply turn this into a lottery. A nonsensical checkerboard pattern might emerge.

Thelen wanted to take the path of least resistance. She would agree to let those out that wanted out.

Wagner thought we should respect landowner's opinions, thank them, and tell them we'll keep their property on our radar. He sees no harm in including owners who want to put small areas on the map.

Salkowski suggested that for the next committee meeting, a final recommendation will be put together, along with maps and policies, and this committee can move on. These recommendations will be working into the overall NWQ Plan and brought to the Planning Commission and County Board.

The Committee may decide that its work is complete and disband, or proceed to look at regulatory issues as discussed in the past. Potential topics may include an ordinance on land alteration in shoreland areas. Also, the SWCD has floated an erosion and sedimentation control ordinance for several years, and the DNR is working on a shoreland regulation update. So far, Wright County is stricter in many respects than what the DNR currently has in place. Staff would like to know where the Committee wants to go.

Following was a short discussion on the State shoreland rules updates. Wagner thought that was not a task for this group, but needs a broader base. Wagner is not so concerned with specifics, but more of a general philosophy, especially certain uses allowed within shoreland, like feedlots and gravel pits. He wants a better "vision" or general philosophy rather than a bunch of new rules. Thelen would like to keep going. Olsen asked if the gravel pit discussion in shoreland is taking place in the aggregate committee. Salkowski summarized the aggregate committee and some of the discussions. Lindstrom admitted he might not know enough about shoreland issues to be able to contribute, but he is willing to participate. Olsen wanted to stay with it. He noted that enforcement is a bigger problem than the need for rules. Kampa would like to keep working. McNellis would like to have some more information.

Salkowski said that for the next meeting, we would look for a guest speaker, perhaps to review the shoreland alteration process in Stearns County. There was a short discussion on how to bring the lake associations together.

At the next meeting, the committee will finalize the map and policies for the NWQ Plan, and have a guest speaker. The meeting is scheduled for November 10th at 1:30 p.m.