

AGRICULTURE AND EXTENSION EDUCATION COMMITTEE
LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Conference Rooms 1&2, County Annex
Stevens Point, WI 54481
July 26, 2016

Members present: Roger Bacon, Marion "Bud" Flood, Bob Gifford, Charles Gussel, Barry Jacowski, Matt Jacowski, Julie Morrow, Dale O'Brien, Larry Raikowski, Jerry Walters, Gerry Zastrow

Others present: John Jadzewski, Farmland Preservation Ad Hoc Steering Committee; Nathan Sandwick and Ken Schroeder, UW-Extension; Jeff Schuler, Steve Bradley and Patty Benedict, Planning and Zoning Department.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:12 p.m. by Planning and Zoning Committee Chair B. Jacowski.

B. Jacowski read the Public Notice statement: Members of the public who wish to address the Committee on specific agenda items must register their request at this time, with such comments subject to the reasonable control of the Committee Chair as set forth in Robert's Rules of Order. No one registered to speak.

2. Discussion/Possible Action – Approval of the Minutes of the June 28, 2016 Joint Meeting of the Agriculture and Extension Education (Ag/Ext Ed), Land and Water Conservation (LWCC), and Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Committees

Motion by Raikowski, second by Zastrow to approve the minutes as presented. Motion carried by voice vote.

3. Discussion/Possible Action – Pages 53-74 of the Farmland Preservation Plan (FPP) Draft

As explained in his memo, Schuler stated the wrong draft revision was provided for the June 28 meeting. The pages titled "Additional Ad Hoc Steering Committee Revisions" contain those changes. Also included in meeting packets are pages 53-74 of the FPP draft and Agritourism information provided by Sara Brish, Executive Director, Stevens Point Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (SPACVB).

Referring to the Agritourism information, Schuler said Brish provided a good overview and representation of activities promoted by the SPACVB. He suggested conveying how Agritourism has been approached in the county previously, and go on record to endorse, encourage, and support those types of activities into the future. As outlined by Brish, the interest, activities, and events have grown over time. The interest of citizens in learning more about the mechanics and behind the scenes aspects of agriculture would be an important thing for these Committees to endorse and encourage. He asked what the Committees want to include – individual aspects that Brish has described in her materials, or a general discussion of the importance of agriculture?

B. Jacowski believes the County has been pretty liberal with agricultural zoning, but some flexibility will be needed as farm entrepreneurs look for ways to bring tourism onto their farm. He believes a statement should be made that there may need to be some zoning adjustments to allow those types of activities on the farm. Walters suggested conditional use permits.

Jadzewski referred to the second page of Brish's letter, regarding John Eron's event barn. Jadzewski is on Board of Adjustment and said the P&Z staff worked well with Eron. He believes staff would be the in the best position to evaluate opportunities as they arise. Many times, there is no precedent for these things. Schuler said the P&Z Committee created precedence in allowing for the barn event venue. The

Zoning Ordinance was changed to include that. Raikowski expects this is the first of many to come. B. Jacowski said as Agritourism grows, and people visit farms to see where their produce comes from, there is potential for people making an issue of additional traffic.

M. Jacowski said Brish's letter sums up the need for Agritourism where it reads, "Today, less than one percent of our nation's consumers live on farms, with many being four to five generations removed from even knowing anyone that farmed. We are raising a generation of children who do not know how apples grow on trees, or how a gallon of milk gets into the grocer's cooler." He feels that is a justification to encourage Agritourism and incorporate into the FPP. He noted the attendance at the dairy breakfast in Portage County is mainly people from villages and cities that are more removed from the rural area. They want to go to the farm and see what's going on and see the calves.

Schuler suggested staff can incorporate a summary or a reference to the information provided by Brish, lay out some examples of the type of things that have happened, and reflect the Committees' point acknowledging previous flexibility with zoning, knowing that into the future, the ability to be flexible must be maintained when Agritourism opportunities arise.

Zastrow questioned what are some issues that may arise with Agritourism, in addition to the potential for increased traffic to farms? Regarding the event barn, B. Jacowski replied there were questions involving hours of operation, parking, and bathroom facilities. Staff worked with Eron to address those issues. Every proposal will be unique. The FPP should indicate there is a willingness to be flexible and promote Agritourism. Schuler said the long range planning document contains the general ideas that you are looking to encourage. The Zoning Ordinance establishes what is allowed. The FPP will convey that the County is open to good ideas that promote and advance people's understanding and participation in the agriculture industry. The different ideas that come along will be addressed on a case by case basis, working to find ways to grant approvals through the regulation oversight of the P&Z Committee.

Schuler offered to bring back language for the Agritourism section. Walters suggested mentioning the cheese making class on County Road J as an example. Another suggestion was Feltz' ice cream business. It was suggested if examples are included, caution should be used so as not to slight someone forgotten.

Regarding pages 53-74, Schuler noted the first section, Farmland Preservation, Agricultural Development Trends/Plans/Needs, contains State requirements. He suggested a page by page review, encouraging comments and questions. Based on population, housing, transportation, utilities, and environmental preservation, the State is looking for how the county addresses those elements. B. Jacowski asked whether there are references in the document citing where the facts and figures information was acquired. Schuler replied all of the information in the first 50 pages is referenced. Throughout pages 53-74, he believes references are included, but he will verify.

On page 53, Schuler asked for comments or questions in terms of the population section and those key vision ideas for quality of life. B. Gifford said he read through it and is pretty comfortable with all of the content and impressed with all of the work. He asked how the FPP will be used in the future? For example, if a giant new subdivision is proposed, can the FPP be used? B. Jacowski said the FPP will be used for a few people in the County that will qualify for FP tax credits. Schuler added one of the most important parts is what Supervisors need to know to be an informed County Board. Agriculture is one of the most important parts of the local economy. County Board Supervisors should be aware of the latest trends, what crops are profitable, irrigation equipment that helps with long term resource preservation, techniques and tactics used in farming operations to help with resource conservation and long term sustainability. Schuler suggested the Agriculture and Extension Education Committee may provide this information, possibly inviting farmers, technical people, water resource people, etc. to provide periodic updates to the County Board on the state of the industry. The FPP is the place to lay out those ideas and provide more universal knowledge about the topics. Portage County has a strong base in resources - water, agriculture production, soils, land cover, and policies should be based on them. The FPP is a

document to inform the public of the County Board's position and can provide P&Z staff with justification for opposing conversion of farmland. How land is used impacts a very valuable resource in the county.

Walters referred to page 54, Key Vision Ideas for Housing, B. Recognizing the Role of Rural Villages in Rural Area Housing. He said larger lot sizes have been preferred in the past; yet, this section suggests residential development in a smaller lot setting, but still in the country. B. Jacowski said farmland can't be saved by increasing lot sizes. Walters said that is his point. Schuler explained there are areas where there is a slightly higher density of people living already. A thought is to direct or suggest more clustered development in those areas. Housing could be directed in a way that wouldn't fragment farmland or interfere with agriculture operations. Schuler added that has been the vision since 2006. Yet, when splitting property, Walters said, we recommended larger parcels. B. Jacowski said, in this plan, we are trying to move to smaller lot sizes and locate more densely populated areas in areas that aren't farmed. Schuler said in the last 10-15 years, if you count the open space design, we've gone through the planning process, which resulted in lot averaging in the subdivision ordinance. In a large acre zoning district, it allows a small number of smaller size lots, keeping the larger bulk of the 40 acre parcel for agriculture.

Referring to page 55, at the bottom of the page, the bullet reading "Divert clean water from feedlots. (Livestock operations and facilities within Water Quality Management Areas.)", Walters asked about water quality management areas (WQMA). Bradley replied WQMA is defined in DNR Administrative Code, NR151, as 300 feet from a river, or 1,000 feet from a lake. These areas may be susceptible to groundwater leaching, especially in the sandy soils. The infiltration rate of water through the soil profile is studied. Bradley said when diverting clean water from feedlots, the primary concern is phosphorus being delivered to surface water, which is why they have the setback from lakes and rivers. There are quite a few areas in the County that are internally drained, where the runoff will sit in a cropped field or woods, or in a closed depression, and phosphorus will not be an issue to surface water. If there is no water quality issue, there isn't a requirement to handle phosphorus runoff. Walters asked who makes that determination? Bradley said it is a State code, but the State looks to the county for implementation. The county's Geographical Information System (GIS) is used to create a map of the WQMAs. Bradley said an area can be accessed on GIS to look at the soil type, contour lines, see where the drainage is, what the slope is, and determine how quick runoff is going to get to a surface water body.

Schuler pointed out page 56 contains Land and Water Resource Management (LWRM) Plan information and other things relating to the topic of environmental preservation. It catalogs the current efforts of the county for that specific purpose.

Page 57 – Schuler referred to Section 5.4, which is the rural area vision statement related to agriculture from the 2006 Comprehensive Plan. The rest of the information on the page held together well for the current effort. Walters asked what is the Land Legacy Fund? Flood said it is part of the Community Foundation. Walters questioned why it is there; he could find nothing to reference it. Schuler said it is likely from the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and will double check that.

Referring to page 57, Sandwick said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee took the most ownership of the key vision ideas for agriculture. This whole section is mostly reciting what is in the existing Comprehensive Plan. He said these four vision ideas are affirmed on page 65, noting that the Ad Hoc Steering Committee also offered another vision idea and made an addition to an existing one. Wildlife was added to the last bullet point on page 57 – Agricultural practices are environmentally sensitive, using practices that protect air, soil, water, and wildlife resources. The added bullet point reads, "The agriculture industry in Portage County utilizes energy saving practices in infrastructure and in production practices." Sandwick suggested the P&Z Committee may want to note that some of the recommendations may be suggestions for other elements of the Comprehensive Plan moving forward. He said there is strength in listing the vision ideas verbatim as in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, but there might also be strength in adding the two additional points that were suggested by the Ad Hoc Steering Committee. Schuler feels the additions on page 65 should be incorporated on page 57. Jazdzewski asked, if you change what is taken directly from the

Comprehensive Plan, would you then have to amend the text of the Comprehensive Plan to make it legal? Sandwick replied no.

Page 58 – Walters feels it is a bold statement saying groundwater throughout the county is safe to drink without treatment. Schuler explained this is a vision idea. Referring to the third bullet, “Groundwater and surface water body quality is periodically monitored and assessed, and a set of regulations restricts development in groundwater recharge areas and areas contributing to surface water bodies”, Walters asked whether wells are included; because wells and the recharge area are the DNR’s responsibility. Schuler said that certainly supports the idea of wellhead protection and seems to reach a bit beyond. The first part states that we want to keep informed on what is going on with the water and need to monitor things to understand where there are problems and what they might mean to people. The next part, “...a set of regulations restricts development in groundwater recharge areas...”, is certainly the case with our current wellhead protection areas. The idea of the vision is there has to be some way of understanding what impacts groundwater. The last part reads, “...restricts development in groundwater recharge areas and areas contributing to surface water bodies”. Schuler believes those statements reflect a lot of the conversation by the Ad Hoc Steering Committee.

Page 59 – Walters referred to #2, second bullet, “Pursue full implementation of water resource protection programs and regulations.” He asked whether there is any regulatory buy in from DNR. It is difficult for the County to pursue full implementation of water resource protection programs and regulations when the DNR is the one who sets high capacity well regulations and determines where they can be located. Schuler believes that statement may be a little open ended and suggested adding a modifier at the end, i.e., within the county’s abilities, or, within the county’s jurisdiction. Walters asked whether this is something the County can do. B. Jacowski suggested striking that bullet. By voice vote, the committees agreed. Because of formatting, M. Jacowski suggested adding the first bullet point to #2 to read, “Groundwater and surface water quantity and quality are of paramount importance to the high quality of life enjoyed by most Portage County residents. This will be done by continually evaluating current and potential programs for protecting the County’s water resources.” There was consensus by the Committees.

At the bottom of the page, under Key Vision Ideas for Economic Development, Walters referred to bullet three, “Businesses may be assisted through incentive programs or other similar mechanisms.”, asking what types of incentive programs are available. B. Jacowski said one program is the tax credit for preserving farmland. M. Jacowski said there is also the value added incentive program for agriculture. Schuler said it is also a tie in to the economic development chapter which can maybe give more detail. Bacon feels that encouraging businesses to reuse vacant lots is a good vision. M. Jacowski said that is addressed on page 60, the first bullet point. Schuler believes this is another place to reiterate that infill is better than expansion.

Walters referred to section 6.9, #3, “How can the Portage County Business Council better promote the rural areas of Portage County?” He suggested moving the third and fourth bullet points from Key Vision Ideas for Economic Development on page 59. Businesses could be assisted through incentive programs, working with towns and villages to make sure that vacant lots get used. Walters feels this is an area for the Business Council to be involved. There was consensus by the Committees to move the bullets. Schuler said the final paragraph is tying those economic development ideas and ideals into the FPP.

Page 61- Sandwick said this section represents most of the discussion from the Ad Hoc Steering Committee, informed in part by comments from the open house and other sources throughout the planning process. Jazdzewski said there was a lot of thought and discussion by the Ad Hoc Steering Committee. B. Jacowski said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee tried to include every aspect of agriculture, from a 5-10 acre truck garden to large scale farming.

Schuler pointed out the first 60 pages of the FPP are background material. This section is establishing what the Ad Hoc Steering Committee, and now these three Committees, want to say about the agriculture

industry. This becomes the foundation of the goals and policies and what the Committees are going to be most accountable for.

Walters referred to page 62, "Viability – How can we ensure the viability of working lands?", and the second bullet, "Design infrastructure, roads, electricity, and communications to keep farms competitive and viable in today's markets." He pointed out putting in infrastructure for the farmers also provides it for non farmers. He feels this is a double edged sword as it provides easier access for people to move out in the country.

B. Jacowski referred to the "Capacity to Grow Food" section, the last sentence is, "Short of protection, there is risk of land being redeveloped..." He said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee feels because money has been invested in irrigation, stone removal, fertilization, etc., the land is already developed as agricultural areas. The term "redevelop" is used throughout the FPP referring to land that may be transitioned out of agricultural uses.

Page 63 – Walters said the last bullet, "City and Villages should minimize their plans for expansion, redirecting growth...", is repetitive. It's a good point to repeat, but are there ways to enforce this? B. Jacowski said no; the City and Villages have extraterritorial boundaries. However, throughout this document, we are making a statement. Schuler said the FPP is a place to go on record objecting expansion on agricultural land. It also gives staff the ability to carry out the position of the County Board.

B. Gifford feels it is good to include access to land issues. It acknowledges one of the problems that people have to get started. Under Spatial Considerations, he said not only farming in close proximity to the urban areas, but farming in the urban areas is something that should be considered. He encouraged more creative thinking in that area. Schuler said that is included as part of the Agritourism section. As you think about opportunities, whether for tourism or a different type of operation, regulatory bodies should be open to the possibilities. Health, safety, welfare is the reason for zoning and impacts of the people around it are considered.

Page 64 – Schuler said the Need For Water section is obviously important to establish that the agriculture industry needs water. This is a document to have a balanced discussion about the use and realistic needs of water in the county. O'Brien said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee suggested having that section in bold print to stress the importance. There was consensus by the Committees. Zastrow referred to the last line in the Need For Water paragraph, suggesting italicizing the last line " – while also assuring stakeholders of reasonable use?" There was consensus by the Committees.

B. Jacowski said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee spent time on the last bullet on the page, "Energy – How can agriculture minimize fossil fuel energy use?" B. Gifford feels it is good to include because it is going to be an ongoing issue.

Page 65 – Schuler pointed out OTHER LAND USES AND RELATIONSHIPS is where efforts after adoption are going to be made, finding ways to coordinate with different departments or services offered to provide the type of education that is described. Part of the legacy of the plan is a concerted effort to educate people about elements of rural areas and what can be expected for those choosing to live there. That becomes information you can report back to committees or the full County Board to keep everyone up to date with what is being done to help people participate in whatever ways they can, whether where they live or how they live, and what's going on.

Page 66 – B. Jacowski said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee took a lot of time discussing this section, because of the difference and variation of farm sizes and how everybody views a farm. Schuler asked Sandwick for suggestions for ideas for this section. B. Jacowski said this is where the Ad Hoc Steering Committee encouraged smaller lot sizes in areas not farmed. Schuler said that it was discussed a couple of times and it will be consistent in the final plan. Sandwick agreed to add some language. Some of the ideas could relate to what has already been expressed, along the lines of encouragement. B. Jacowski

mentioned land use policies to preserve farmland and the need to state that you can't increase residential lot sizes and save farmland.

Walters asked whether anything can be done to discourage high water use industries from locating in the County, i.e., Perrier or an ethanol plant. Schuler believes that would probably come out of the Groundwater Management Plan (GMP) in terms of what issues it would create and the type of regulations that could be put in place. It gets down to the licensing of wells, which is done by the State. The County does not have jurisdiction over the amount of water that can come out of the ground locally. Walters said he would like this to be addressed somewhere. In terms of a water bottling plant, Bradley said he is not sure of any regulatory authority; however he referred to page 65, stating the need for water for agriculture, which could be used as a case against companies such as Perrier. Water is needed for agriculture, and cannot be exported.

Referring to lot sizes and land use, B. Gifford mentioned the concept of eco villages, where there is clustered housing cooperatively owned, or some type of homeowners association. Surrounding, there is farmland used for high intensity, biodiverse agriculture. B. Gifford said he did not see that is this plan, and really wouldn't expect it in Portage County, but it is an idea that could be used someday. Schuler said the P&Z Committee created the Planned Development District to allow that type of development, a cluster of residential development with agriculture around it. The mechanism to do that exists. He asked the Committees, when reviewing the goals and objectives, to see if they find something that resonates with that.

Page 67 – Sandwick said the goals listed on the bottom of the page are summaries and need to be consistent with how each goal is worded on the subsequent pages. He will review minutes from Ad Hoc Steering Committee minutes to make sure the wording is correct. Schuler said the statements at the top of the page are what the Ad Hoc Steering Committee and these Committees want to say about agriculture as a primary driver. The farmers take pride in what they do. Agriculture and forestry are developed uses. Good farmland is irreplaceable. Preserve and protect lands capable of conversion. Strongly encourage local, county, and state officials to utilize this document as a guide in setting policy or planning. The goals are meant to chart how you accomplish those statements. The Ad Hoc Steering Committee expects agriculture to maintain or grow from its present level of prominence in the foreseeable future. It is not a withering industry. Plan for it, it is going to stay, it is going to improve. B. Jacowski said farming is the backbone of our economy in Portage County. The Ad Hoc Steering Committee feels strongly about making those statements. Schuler noted, in the series of the six statements, there isn't really a strong statement in there about water. B. Jacowski said it was mentioned several times previously and members of the Ad Hoc Steering Committee present felt it was not necessary to add a statement about water.

Page 68 – Zastrow referred to Goal 2, Policy Recommendations, Focus, asking whether farming actually creates livable wage jobs, enough to hire employees, or does it depend on what you're farming? B. Jacowski said farming certainly does provide a living wage. M. Jacowski explained modern tractors have computers and agricultural employers have found out they have to pay for skilled employees to operate the equipment. Fox Valley Technical College has opened three new programs in agriculture to accommodate the farmers needing qualified workers. Graduates with two year technical degrees can make \$50,000-\$60,000.

B. Gifford said there are several issues here: Farm succession, the need for better paying jobs, and the need to develop agribusiness. He mentioned combining cooperative business as a method of succession for farmers. We need to be aware that there are creative ways to fund and provide for a new young workforce to come in and make succession. Schuler added the Focus statement suggests encouraging that in any way possible. B. Jacowski said smaller farmers are doing a fantastic job in developing and marketing to niche markets. He added the Ad Hoc Steering Committee feels strongly that every aspect of farming, small to large, needs to be protected.

Page 69 – Flood said he is encouraged by letter l) “Support development of roads that can support implements of husbandry, and encourage development of implements of husbandry that recognize limits of the road.” Roads can only handle so much.

Page 70 – B. Jacowski made a statement regarding letter c) “Convene meaningful and proactive community conversations, routinely, about what people who live in agricultural communities need and expect.” This topic was discussed at length by the Ad Hoc Steering Committee, not only what they need and expect, but also what to expect when someone moves into the agricultural community. A suggestion was made, to have either the P&Z office or maybe a Town contact, to provide information to anyone moving to the country what to expect in farming areas.

Page 71 – For the supervisors not familiar with the P&Z Department’s relationships with the municipalities, Schuler said P&Z provides planning assistance to all 27 units of government in the county. P&Z staff has reason and cause to be present when municipalities have discussions about long range planning and can bring up the points made in the FPP about infill, development, facilities; those types of things. It is included in the FPP to give an even stronger base for making those opinions known when we work with the municipalities.

Regarding Goal 5, Schuler reiterated it is very important and he assumes the water aspect is covered effectively at the bottom of page 71 and top of page 72.

Page 72 –B. Jacowski said the Ad Hoc Steering Committee felt it was important and talked extensively about how the FPP and the GMP have to go hand in hand. Every stakeholder, everybody who lives in Portage County, everybody who visits Portage County needs groundwater. We all realize that and look to protect it for everybody. M. Jacowski said page 72 discusses that well, referring to letter h) “Engage residents, businesses, and industry in sharing in the goal of protecting water resources – pursuing solutions that support all stakeholders’ goals.” Walters feels there should be a mandatory one semester FFA class in high school to give students an understanding of all of the aspects of agriculture in the county. Education is mentioned in the FPP, but not a venue. M. Jacowski agreed it is a great idea, but it is not likely to happen in foreseeable future because you couldn’t find any teachers to teach it. Walters suggested having Portage County farmers put the class on. M. Jacowski said classes must have a certified teacher.

M. Jacowski referred to the Farmland Preservation Area map. He commented there is a lot of area included on it as farmland preservation. One of the main driving forces behind this FPP is for the tax credit. He asked for clarification whether any land in green is eligible for the tax credit. Schuler replied no and explained the mapping is a two-step process. Land must be identified as being eligible or desirable for preservation. The Ad Hoc Steering Committee came up with five or six criteria that most logically represent where farmland should be available into the future, i.e., land towns have identified as medium or high intensity agriculture areas, current A1 zoned land, the Drainage District, and irrigated areas. The second part is up to the towns to apply the zoning wherever they want. In order for the landowners to be eligible for the tax credits, they must be in an agriculture preservation area that is 80% zoned A1. When the towns are done with zoning, the FP area map will have less eligible areas. Towns have to work with the landowners that want to claim the tax credits and make sure they can be included. M. Jacowski said he had a few constituents contact him to say their zoning was changed from A1 in Buena Vista and they are no longer eligible for FP. Schuler said the Town rezoned those properties. He added the State was contacted and if the Town rezones the land back to A1, the landowners will be eligible again. That is not something the county can do. Schuler asked if there are any questions on how the mapping was accomplished. B. Jacowski added conservancy zoning is allowed tie areas together.

Page 73 – No comments.

B. Jacowski said staff has been made aware of a few changes. Schuler and Sandwick will work on verbiage. When the Committees meet again, there will be new additions to the draft document along with the few changes that were made at this meeting.

4. Discussion/Possible Action – Recommendation of the Farmland Preservation Draft for Public Comment
No action taken.

5. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 23, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

6. Adjournment

Motion by O'Brien, second by Bacon to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Benedict, Recording Secretary

Minutes approved at August 23, 2016 joint Agriculture and Extension Education, Land and Water Conservation, and Planning and Zoning Committees meeting.

B. Jacowski, Planning and Zoning Committee Chair