

McHenry County Regional Planning Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 20, 2008

Commissioners Present: Chairman Charlie Eldredge, Ron Bauman, Dennis Dreher, Jim McNutt, Nancy Schietzelt, Jerry Davenport, Craig Hubert, John Jung, Jeremy Shaw, Frank Harrison, RB Thompson, and Mike Rein

Commissioners Absent: Bill Swenson

Staff Present: Matthew Hansel, Maryanne Wanaski and Cindy Sassaman

Also Present: Pat Kennedy, Dan Volkers, Kim Willis, John Darger, Anna Moeller, John Jung, Robert Ludwig

Guests: Devin Lavigne and Brandon Nolin; Houseal & Lavigne

Chairman Eldredge called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m.

Public Participation

None

Director's Remarks

None

Old Business – Vision Statement

Devin Lavigne and Brandon Nolin of Houseal Lavigne were present to discuss feedback received regarding the vision statement. Mr. Lavigne explained that the feedback he received was lengthy and confusing. He mentioned that the writing type used in the vision statement was a retrospective. He suggested that they could present information in bullet points and be more pointed in their vision in 20 years. He mentioned that at points in the plan you need to articulate the vision. Chairman Eldredge said the main objectives were the length and the style. Some Commissioners stated that they could be swayed to either version of the vision. Mr. Thompson referenced the City of Woodstock's vision that was put into a tri-fold brochure. He mentioned that developers, department heads cited certain paragraphs in the vision. In his opinion, they focused on the areas in the vision and showed that people bought into the vision. Mr. Lavigne said he could produce the bullet point version in a prospective style. Mr. Dreher felt that if presented as Mr. Thompson previously mentioned it could be used as a marketing tool.

John Jung thanked everyone for their hard work and said that it had been a pleasure working with everyone. He will no longer be the liaison to the Commission.

New Business - Ag Draft

Chairman Eldredge stated that the Commission had just recently received their copy of the agriculture draft and open space draft from Houseal Lavigne. It was the consensus of the Commission to provide feedback. Mr. Dreher said he could give some comments today but receiving the document yesterday he would like to wait until the next meeting to discuss thoroughly. Where the various chapters are flagged they need to continue to support the basis of the information. Mr. Davenport suggested trying to use the policies, goals and objectives. If there were grammatical mistakes fix them. Mr. Bauman suggested eliminating strategies and keeping the policies.

Mr. Lavigne explained their methodology. He explained that they tried to produce a standardized format for each chapter. The chapters as sent did not have a standard format. They tried to set-up a template of how each chapter would be laid out. The Community Character section is intertwined into everything. After creation of the template, there was text that had to be written to make the information flow. They felt that the agriculture chapter needed something to kick it off and so they started off by introducing the goals. They use the key points of the vision which will appear at the top of the page as they relate to agriculture. He noted that the green highlighted areas are original text that they wrote to help the document flow better, the yellow highlighted areas are text that they have interpreted and tried to make more concise and need verification. Cyan highlighted areas are those that were added by staff. He gave an example that referenced the Imagine McHenry County Survey, but the survey results were never revealed. He asked for hard facts/statistics to put in the document. Mr. McNutt suggested that Mr. Lavigne contact the subcommittee chairs when questions arise. On all the chapters where flagged, they need to continue to build support by confirming information and that will make the document stronger.

Chairman Eldredge commented on his approval of the readability and layout of the document thus far.

Mr. Davenport felt that his subcommittee spent a lot time in the draft on policy statements. He said that their goals and objectives were really policy statements. They spend a lot of time and effort on each policy. He noted that in the farmland section the policies were not brought forward. They decided on how to handle the LESA system and decided to use the LE portion only. He stated that certain points were missed and he understood why, but he suggested that the goals and objectives that the subcommittees created should be used. If the Commission missed something it is appreciated if it is brought to them, but grammatical errors should be addressed.

Mr. Bauman stated that he would suggest eliminating strategies and continue with policies. Each subcommittee feels strongly about their policies. If it is in the draft as a policy it should stay a policy.

Mr. Dreher noted the difference between policies and strategies. He felt that strategies were important because they provide the framework for action. Policies set the tone for the strategies; it is not one or the other.

Mr. Lavigne explained that the policies become the ground rules for development. These serve as a checklist.

Ms. Schietzelt had a different take. She stated that she compared paragraph to paragraph from the draft to the new document. She stated she was pleased. She mentioned that overall it is different than what was submitted. She liked the way it flowed and feels it is easy to understand. She noted that every single policy statement was included for the most part.

Chairman Eldredge stated that the Commission voted on the policies and they should be included in the document.

Mr. Thompson brought a copy of a tri-fold brochure from the City of Woodstock which cites their goals and objectives. Chairman Eldredge felt if the County could produce a similar document they would greatly benefit.

Mr. Shaw commented that we do not want to make statements based on what is happening today and not what will happen in the next 5 to 10 years. It implies that we have a lack of vision. He gave the example of, "The price of oil rising....." from page 2 of the alternative fuel and energy and recently the price of oil has dropped. Mr. Lavigne stated that those are the types of sentences that they are highlighting in pink. Those are the types of statements that might need to be removed.

Mr. Shaw left the meeting at 6:50 p.m.

Mr. Dreher commented that it seemed like the agriculture section was much shorter than the original version. Mr. Lavigne explained that some of the agriculture information has been moved to other sections. Mr. Davenport requested that if any information is left out that the Commission be informed. Mr. Lavigne said he did not think anything would be left out, but if it was it would be noted.

Mr. Harrison's commented that 15% – 20% of the text of the agriculture section is devoted to LESA and the only portion that is used is the LE portion. He felt that there could be too much information on LESA. His second observation is that it only describes half of the county. He would like a description included in the plan regarding half of the county being intensely urban and the other half being intensely agricultural. He noted that we mention how traditional agriculture is good but there is a significant growth of nurseries, tree farms etc. These alternate uses are in agriculture areas and are considered an agriculture use. We cannot ignore these uses and should be incorporated into the plan. Mr. Bauman stated it was not included in the plan due to lack of information. Chairman Eldredge felt that these uses

do a lot of good things that agriculture does and should be recognized. The only negative is that nurseries normally do not return to farmland.

Mr. Davenport asked that the amount of corn and soybeans in terms of amounts should be added to the plan.

Mr. Harrison left the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Mr. Baumann gave examples of specialty crops and how much can be grown in terms of amounts on one acre. He mentioned that he did not see much on agtourism. Mr. Lavigne stated it was moved to economic development section and will make mention of it in the agriculture section in the new version. He also asked that charts should be included that describe the crops and animals and ranks in the state. They also have a chart with the associated LE scores and their relation to soils and should be included in the appendix.

Open Space

Mr. Bauman mentioned agriculture conservation programs including conservation security contracts, conservation reserve program and the continuous conservation reserve program. Because the land owner needs to be in the federal farm program, this information should remain in the agriculture section instead of open space.

Ms. Schietzelt questioned objectives- strategy added in by the staff regarding bio-fuels. Mr. Volkens mentioned currently the information is accurate.

Mr. Dreher mentioned that his preference is to have a reference in the back of each chapter. Mr. Lavigne stated that they will work on polishing the document at the end of the process.

Ms. Schietzelt said that soils are not mentioned in open space and felt that they should be mentioned in open space section. She noted that the information was included in the draft chapter. Mr. Lavigne stated again that they would not move things around, but make mention of them in the appropriate places.

If Mr. Lavigne has questions during the writing of the document they will try to contact the subcommittee chairs by phone.

Chairman Eldredge thanked Mr. Lavigne and appreciates the work thus far. The next meeting will be December 11th and the second meeting will be December 18th. Mr. Lavigne reported that there should be 2 more chapters by the next meeting.

MCCG

Ms. Moeller reported that a meeting has been set up to discuss population projections and LEAM maps and how municipalities can make comments. The meeting will take place December 12th at 9:30 a.m. usually at the Stage Left Cafe or somewhere in Woodstock. Chairman Eldredge asked if the Townships will also be able to attend. Ms. Moeller will confirm and notify.

Members Comments

Mr. McNutt wanted to mention that Mr. Baumann, Ms. Kennedy, Mr. Volkers and Ms. Willis attended an agriculture meeting along with Pam Althoff and Barb Wheeler. They spoke about agricultural protection legislation that was never passed for this area. Ms. Althoff will reintroduce this legislation this spring. Mr. Volkers reported that it moved to the House last year and moved out of Rules Committee where it stood. Mr. Tryon is a co-sponsor and it will likely be reintroduced this spring. It is picking up momentum again and he will keep the Commission posted. Ms. Althoff would make farmland preservation an actual statute and also an item that could go to a referendum to produce funding on a local level. Mr. Volkers said that typically they are looking for a government agency or a not-for-profit to monitor the program.

Mr. Dreher spoke to Mr. Lavigne on assistance for the communications subcommittee. They are working to find a date on in December. It was decided that the Communications subcommittee will meet with Houseal Lavigne on December 10th at 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Bauman questioned if the economic development chapter maps would be brought back for discussion. Chairman Eldredge said that several items will be brought back and voted on.

Additional Public Comment

Kathy Bergen Schmidt mentioned that she has been a member of Imagine McHenry County Survey. The surveys were available at libraries for people to complete. There were about 3,000 surveys that were completed. The "Big One" is more detailed and they should look at that instead of the executive summary. She thought that Lisa Haderlien, the current secretary, could be contacted if information is needed.

Chairman Eldredge wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving!

Adjournment

Motion by Mr. Davenport seconded by Mr. Thompson to adjourn the meeting. All members present voting aye. Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.