

McHenry County Regional Planning Commission
AGRICULTURE SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
October 24, 2007

Call to Order / Roll Call: The meeting began at 5:15 p.m. Members present: Ron Baumann, Chairman, and Jeremy Shaw. Member absent: Frank Harrison. Staff present: SuzAnne Ehardt and Jean Hervert Niemann.

Minutes: The minutes of September 26, 2007, could not be approved for lack of a quorum as Mr. Shaw was not in attendance at that meeting.

Public Participation: Pat Kennedy

Discussion Items: The subcommittee reviewed a recently compiled map of the LE scores (soil productivity) that are 76 or greater by 5 point groups. The county land use map was references to see where certain land uses have precluded the use of the soils for agriculture. Mr. Baumann asked if the P & D Department has a count of lots in recently approved subdivisions.

Mr. Baumann opened discussion by asking the question of how the Agriculture Subcommittee could provide a strategy or rationale for the County Board to consistently reference as a reason to deny rezoning requests located in areas with high LE scores. The Subcommittee considered mapping, goals and objectives for the 2030 Plan. Ms. Ehardt noted that rapid growth and land use change will cause a plan map to become outdated; so the text of the document needs to be written to clearly guide land use decisions through time. Mr. Baumann asked Mr. Shaw to research the state statutes to see what legal alternatives exist and could be employed to minimize the consumption of good agricultural land on a county level.

Ms. Ehardt noted that many County Board decisions are made in response to input from constituents. In the past, the McHenry County Farm Bureau and individual farmers were more involved and vocal at County Board and subcommittee meetings. There is a need for education and a united stand on farm protection. In addition, a constant representation from the farm community would be necessary. The 2010 Plan used the LESA method as a way to differentiate land with the highest scores (designated as agricultural) from the land with lower scores (designated as agriculture/rural). In the future, the LESA methodology may again be helpful to the 2030 Plan.

Mr. Shaw said that the subcommittee should include information and encouragement for state and federal programs that provide monetary incentives or tax incentives for saving farmland. Ms. Ehardt offered that it will be through farmers and farm ownership that farmland will be saved. One positive action could be to write a goal to support the work and funding of the Agriculture Conservation Easement and Farmland Protection committee.

The meeting ended at 6:47 p.m.

Approved 5-8-08