

Town of Ulysses Agriculture Committee Meeting
Sept. 22, 2016

Present: Chaw Chang, John Wertis, John Gaige, Greg Reynolds, Krys Cail, Monika Roth

Meeting called to order at 7:35 PM.

No minutes for last meeting yet. Monika volunteered to take notes. Concern about whether there will be someone from the town to take notes in future.

Chaw suggested he would bring up the need for help with minutes in the budget request for this committee.

Announcements:

Krys Cail – reminder to review the County Agriculinary Tourism Strategy – she noted that zoning in area of BD trail may also be important to consider in relation to ag tourism connections and how zoning might impact this.

Chaw – mentioned he sent the zoning draft to Matt Brower at Ag & Markets for review; Monika mentioned she also sent the draft to Bob Somers at Ag & Markets and George Frantz.

Report from Zoning Steering Committee liaison – Krys - on the meeting she attended with the Zoning committee and consultants – She reported that the zoning committee hopes to have a draft plan for Ag zone for review at their next meeting (end of October), after which there will be public meetings/hearings. Important to get people engaged when there are public meetings. **Things are likely to move quickly so the committee needs to be prepared. Input is needed soon and needs to be specific.**

John W. – The committee being chaired fairly by Nancy Zahler. There are a few other ag friendly folks. Communication with farmers in Town is needed. CCE could help get post cards out to farmers (Debbie has list) to invite them to a meeting- key folks: Thor O., Switzer, Tony P., Austic, Weatherby, Mark Ochs, others? Question: **Is there a position from this group with the density averaging proposal?** John W and Krys both question the proposal relative to development pressure which is not so great as the zoning proposal seems to suggest.

This group needs to be clear about what we don't like, and what we want.

- 1- Greg – use of taxpayer funds will be used for a situation that has little real need based on development
- 2- Krys – important not to start fights...density zoning is a useful tool in situations where there is genuine development pressure, too big a tool for our situation, and too expensive – lots of staff administration; important to avoid programming that increases the tax burden which makes it more costly to farm
- 3- John W – see handout – suggested **comments related to density averaging** –
- 4- Density averaging resulting in fewer lots per parcel – therefore the development value is less and the difference between Ag and Development values – makes town farmers less competitive for PDR program funding; one way in which PDR is preferable to zoning...which provides permanent easement; zoning can be changed over time and therefore does not really protect agriculture

- 5- John W – all parcels are not the same...some areas are good for farming, others not...density averaging does not take into account soil and site features. Can we provide a resolution for the next meeting?? May not be discussed....but still would be read. Krys will attend.
- 6- Chaw – density averaging is overly complex – deterrent to develop, even for simple subdivision and it also gives lots of discretion to Planning Officer, not elected position/appointed therefore not accountable to citizens
- 7- Krys – another concern is that once density is reached... further development is limited; except then town folks realize that land is not developable...they may change zoning and ag is lost
- 8- Greg – lakeshore has density zoning...currently; it would be good to have farmland treated the same across the town...
- 9- Greg – should whatever we recommend relate to ag in all zones, some concern that at present the committee is dealing with A-1 zone.

Key points that everyone agreed upon relative to density averaging:

- overly complex
 - not the right tool for town...
 - does not reflect current town development patterns
 - arbitrary density cap that does not relate to the actual site conditions – some land may be more suited for development...could have more lots...prepare a map to show what could happen with a tax parcel map
 - more costly in terms of staff time tracking development on lots...tax implications
 - disincentive to PDR, given that this takes away development value...and therefore the Ag Value and Development value are “similar” and there is no incentive for enrolling in permanent easement...state PDR program has potential for permanent easement/protection of farmland (start with this)
 - Also include this if we can get clarity from Fred --
- Loan question – as per Fred Hudson – borrowing money on land – depends on what land use is for surrounding parcels – comparables are used for determining land values – density averaging...

Question - Should this go to the committee on Monday?? Sept. 26? Or not?

Krys will go to the meeting and state that the committee has been reviewing the plan and will be preparing a statement relative to what they like or do not like. Does not have time to write up a statement at this time and it may not be needed.

Krys prefers to do a more comprehensive review...with all points addressed.

John prefers to deal with one point now and

Other parts of the Zoning draft document --

Chaw has concern with Subdivision requirements – simple subdivision (p. 13) has way too many requirements...everything becomes more costly....requires a professional for even simple subdivision; when a farmer needs cash quickly, there are too many requirements...

Krys – purpose of document is poorly written...focus should be on preserving productive agriculture...not just ag lands...; Chaw has issue with second statement –inherent conflict between ag and other uses...

Chaw - Regulating farming activities – concern about this...
Appears to be anti-farming ...pushing regs as far as they can

Krys - Economic impact of ag should be primary relative to open space.

Krys will collect comments from all and summarize. Please edit document electronically or leave a hard copy for Tom (Krys's Husband) in Town offices.

Next meeting of Committee – Oct. 20, Krys will send out draft of comments beforehand and resend to all or there may be a meeting needed.

Send a communication to farmers to summarize key concerns (density averaging). Do you know what density averaging means...?

Check in with Mark Ochs...he help in talking with farmers...

Invite farmers to next meeting: Bob Weatherby, Greg Mol?, Thor – may not come, Mark Ochs, Bruce Austic, Phil Switzer, Ann Filley, Tony Potenza, Danny Smith?, Black Sheep, George Holmes, Russ Carpenter, Brown (younger one), Pine Ridge- Stevenson, Bergen, Brent Welch, Chase Estate?, Stover, Jerry Lilley; landowners getting ag assessment? Dan Northrup, Clemens, others?

Budget request:

Chaw will ask for staff support for minutes, mailing expenses, copying, maps, other such costs...

Adjourned, 9:25 PM.