

Walworth County Land Conservation Committee

MINUTES

Thursday, November 19, 2009 at 12:30 p.m.

Walworth County Government Center
County Board Room
Elkhorn, WI 53121

The meeting was called to order by Chair Kilkenny at 12:37 p.m.

Roll call - Committee members present included: Supervisors Hawkins, Ingersoll, Kilkenny, Citizen Member Burwell and USDA/FSA Representative Henningfeld. A quorum was declared.

County staff present – David Bretl, County Administrator, Michael Cotter, Director of Land Use & Resource Management (LURM), Louise Olson, Deputy Director, LURM, Fay Amerson, Urban Manager; and Joann Douglas, Recording Secretary;

Also in attendance (that signed in) – Nancy Russell, Walworth County Board Chair; Nathan Fikkert, NRCS; Robert David, farm owner; Allen Morrison, farm owner; Maureen Vander Sanden, newspaper reporter; and Mariette Nowak.

Supervisors Hawkins and Citizen Member Burwell moved and seconded approval of the agenda. The motion carried 5-0.

Supervisor Hawkins and Ingersoll moved and seconded approval of the October 20, 2009 LCC minutes and October 20, 2009 Joint LCC and CZA Special Meeting minutes. The motion carried 5-0.

Public Comment – Chair Kilkenny read a letter from former County Board Supervisor Roy Lightfield, W1706 Potters Road, Burlington, Wisconsin, dated November 18, 2009. Mr. Lightfield said, “I would like this read under the ‘Public Comment’ portion of Thursday’s November 19th, 2009 Land Conservation Committee Agenda. I have participated in Farmland Preservation Program since its conception and was instrumental in the development of preserving and protecting this great Walworth County resource. This program not only provides financial incentives to struggling landowners/farmers; it also protects the environment by having the topsoil on our farmlands conserved. There will be several hundred farm families that rely on this program not only for income but to preserve and protect the farmland in Walworth County. The ‘Working Lands Initiative’ has other programs that would also provide flexibility to the rural community.” A copy is on file.

Walworth County Land and Water Resource Management Plan Public Hearing Date – Ms Olson said a public hearing is a statutory requirement from the Department of Agriculture under Ch 92, state statutes. Also a requirement is the formation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) Two CAC meetings were conducted on March 24 and August 4, 2009 to help determine what issues were most important. The plan included items that were considered through the Smart Growth process and county-wide surveys. A 5 year work plan is also a requirement showing who will be doing the work and hours needed to complete it. To fully implement the plan, 9 employees, working 20,523 hours at a cost estimate of \$678,894/year would be needed. Currently there are 7 employees. Ms Olson said there is a disclaimer based on financial availability for the implementation of these projects and programs within the plan. The plan will be used to seek additional grants if needed. Other

components of the plan include Working Lands Initiative and Farmland Preservation Program. **Supervisors Hawkins and Ingersoll moved and seconded having a Public Hearing for the Land and Water Resource Management Plan on Monday, January 18, 2010 at 1:30 p.m. LCC Meeting. Motion carried 5-0.**

Farm Bureau Correspondence/Working Lands Initiative(WLI) /Farmland Preservation (FPP) – Ms Olson said the Farm Bureau indicated WLI/FPP is important to the community and support it. She will contact the Farm Bureau with the date of the informational meeting. **Supervisor Hawkins and USDA/FSA Representative Henningfeld moved and seconded placing the Farm Bureau correspondence on file. Motion carried 5-0**

Working Lands Initiative (WLI) Future Informational Meeting – Louise Olson said the information she gave the LCC came from several sources including USDA FSA CED Tom Oasen, for crop pricing. She gave the Pro's and Con's on Working Lands Initiative and explained some Pro's may be seen to others as Con's. Ms Olson said the 431 FPP claims had an average tax credit in 2005 of \$550. There were also 730 claims in the Wisconsin Farmland Tax Relief Credit with an average claim of \$280. When the Working Lands Initiative is in place, the Farmland Tax Relief Credit will be suspended, and new participation in Farmland Preservation may be closer to 700 claims since it is a flat rate based on acres, not linked to ones income tax, the credit is approximately 3 times higher, and the calculation is easier to understand. If Walworth County does not participate in Farmland Preservation, farmers would not get the minimum of \$7.50 per acre per year. If agricultural land is rezoned from A-1 in Walworth County, the average conversion fee under current rules would be approximately \$903 (\$301 x 3) and is based on a rate by township by Department of Revenue. Chair Kilkenny stated for the record and Michael Cotter reiterated the pro's and con's Ms Olson provided were not her views, but were an informational baseline. The informational meeting will be January 13, 2010, 1:30 p.m. at the Health and Human Services Auditorium. **USDA/FSA Representative Henningfeld and Supervisor Hawkins moved and seconded having the Informational Working Lands Initiative Meeting Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at 1:30 p.m.. Motion carried 5-0**

Farmland Preservation Planning Grant Application – Louise Olson said she and Fay Amerson reviewed the statutory requirements and the grant application and feels very confident it is a good time to apply. We have the option to withdraw at a later date. This is a 50% cost sharing grant with a maximum of \$30,000. Ms Olson felt we could take many components from the Smart Growth Plan and it could possibly be done "in house". **Supervisor Ingersoll and Citizen Member Burwell moved and seconded authorizing Louise Olson to apply for the Farmland Preservation Planning Grant. Supervisor Ingersoll and USDA/FSA Representative Henningfeld moved and seconded to amend the motion to include that Chair Russell sign the application. Motion carried 5-0**

Next Meeting Date – The next meeting date is December 14, 2009 at 1:30 p.m. if necessary.

Adjournment - **On motion and second by Supervisor Hawkins and Ingersoll , Chair Kilkenny adjourned the meeting at approximately 1:50 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.**

Submitted by Joann Douglas, Recording Secretary. Minutes are not considered final until approved by the committee at the next regularly scheduled meeting.