

# Ag Land Program – Technical Review Committee

## Meeting Notes

Monday, March 17, 2008

2:30 – 4:30 pm

### Members Attending:

Larry Stoner

John Gillies

Vicki Hawley

Dick Yoder

Bill Querhn

Doug Dostal

Greg Ebe

Bob Tull

Chuck Antholt

### Others Attending:

Paul Grey

Samya Lutz

Jim Ormiston

David Stalheim

Henry Bierlink

Marv Van Mersbergen

x = attending

o = absent with notice

1. Review agenda, March 3 meeting notes – Greg Ebe introduced himself as a seed potato farmer and a partner in a local engineering firm. Henry asked for comments on the March 3 meeting notes. It was noted that a connection to the Council was important to work on. A presentation to the Council will be made concerning the work so far will be made soon. Bob asked David about the recent Council decision on docketing land related proposals. Was the decision to not docket some items a sign the Council wasn't making farmland protection a priority? David assured the group that was not the case. A few of the items for consideration are going to be discussed in the TRC and the Council decided to wait until the TRC completes it work before making these decisions. Other items may be addressed by the Ag Advisory Committee before the Council decides to docket them.
2. Prioritize Threats to Ag Lands – Henry attempted to summarize the list of threats we generated in the prior meeting into four broad areas of interest. Each of these areas were briefly discussed with some additional definition added. A fifth area was judged important enough to be added – taxation.
  - Parcelization of the Ag Zone
  - Market Pressures
  - Competition with Critical Areas – includes wetland mitigation
  - Enforcement/Review of existing laws, codes – APO, siting criteria, consolidations, Right to Farm.
  - Taxation – implementation of open space ag criteria, building improvements are currently not included in open space ag. Other counties apply this differently.

The intent of the TRC will be to understand each of these five areas better by having resource individuals attend our meetings and discuss their knowledge in these areas. Members are encouraged to submit studies, real world stories, and other information that helps illustrate each of these concerns.

3. Understanding Market Pressures - conversations with:

- Jim Ormiston, appraiser
- Marv Van Mersbergen, Windemere Real Estate

A wide ranging discussion with two experts in ag land sales was held. The discussion helped TRC members to understand what has been happening recently in ag land values. It also helped to explore ideas about what might work to reduce density in the valuable ag lands while respecting the values current landholders have. One idea was to identify areas where minimum mandatory densities would be established and couple these areas with requirements for transferring densities from resource land areas. King County was mentioned as a place we might want to research their farmland preservation tools.

4. Public Involvement and education - Paul noted that he and Chuck were planning to attend a Futurewise Steering Committee meeting soon. This group has had similar discussions about ag land preservation tools and it is Paul's goal that we work together on a productive path. Paul reviewed the updated Questionnaire noting the improved mechanics of the survey, the partners that have helped to create the survey, and the effort to neutralize questions so that respondents would not be misled. The hope will be to collect statistically significant data from numerous target audiences which will be provided to the TRC and then used as a basis for discussions within the target audiences and as then a means of bringing diverse audiences together to discuss rural land issues. Future public forums will be built through this program.

5. Resources – Available/Needed

- State Farmland Protection
  - i. Office of Farmland Preservation – Henry distributed an agenda for an April 2 meeting of the Task Force in Mt. Vernon. He encouraged members to attend to connect with what tools are being used statewide.
  - ii. Recreation and Conservation Funding Board – Has \$4 mill. available for farmland PDR purchases with a May 1 deadline for application. The County has received over \$300k in the past from this source but has not been able to apply it due to conflicting requirements between the State and Federal programs.
- Existing case studies of TDR program were suggested. David noted that the CTED report on TDR's would be out this spring. Other case studies will be gathered and provided.
- A report on how many densities currently exist in the ag zone and targeted rural zones was suggested. How many densities and at what value are we seeking to address?

- County Parks Plan should be known and understood – Greenways may provide us with good background information as to process and values – Bond capacity for purchasing some values should be explored.
- Natural Heritage Plan – 1991 – copies at 3/3 mtg.
- Purchase of Development Right Program summary – distributed 2/11
- AAC Rural Land Study – distributed 2/11
- TDR Program Market Value Estimates – 2003 – Pruetz report – distributed 3/3
- Maps:
  - potential build out in the ag zones
  - open space ag areas

Meeting Schedule – Due to several members being out of the County on April 7<sup>th</sup> that meeting has been cancelled and the next meeting will be April 21<sup>st</sup>. Members are again encouraged to identify alternates to serve in their place so that the process can continue without undue interruption. We will include the proposed alternate list to the Council and the Executive when we provide them with a first quarter report in May.

Upcoming Meetings

April 21	June 2	July 21
May 5	June 16	August 4
May 19	July 7	August 18