

**Town of White Creek
Comprehensive Plan and Ag Protection Plan
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
July 15, 2009**

Attendees: , Carol Moore, Don Sweet, Sarah Ashton, Rody Walker, Jim Perry, Peter Hetko
Absent: Tim Smith, Rupert Jennings, Bill Badgeley , J. Tudor, Rich Moses, Ed Gulley, Darryl Caputo,

Minutes: The minutes of the June 17th meeting were reviewed and approved.

Sub- Vision Statements for the Comprehensive Plan: The committee reviewed the visions for the sub-themes of the comprehensive plan including the economy, community character, environment, recreation and services/infrastructure. With regard to economy, it was confirmed that the agricultural economy had its own sub-vision statement and this sub-vision pertained to non- the non-agricultural economy. Other additions to the sub-vision statements included expanding upon ‘wildlife habitats preserved’ to say ‘Diverse wildlife habitats are preserved and accessible. With regard to recreation adding “The community offers diverse arts and cultural opportunities”.

Criteria to Prioritize Farmland: Meeting members continued to work on developing the criteria to prioritize farmland. There was an interested in better understanding how important soils are and to this end, Nan had produced and handed out a map noting where prime soils and soils of statewide importance are located in White Creek. Farm size was brought up and Nan asked ‘Is the size of the farm important to ranking the parcels?’ Should a farm made up of 5-6 parcels rank higher than a smaller farm? Perry suggested that size was not important. Walker suggested that smaller parcels might be more vulnerable to development. Sweet suggested it would depend on how much road frontage the parcel had. Perry noted that if the agricultural parcel was an island unto itself (surrounded by development) then it might be OK if it went for development. Walker noted the importance of retaining as much agricultural land as possible—he wondered if in the State level development rights purchase programs how important local criteria would be (as opposed to state criteria already established). A 28 acre parcel could support a successful organic farm better perhaps than a rocky 80 acre parcel. Perry suggested that the Town consider not just the presence but the amount of a particular prime soil or one of statewide importance or perhaps use the ranking that Washington County Soil and Water has developed which looks at and gives points to a wider range of soils. Nan will conduct both analysis and share the results with the committee. Ultimately Nan reiterated that by applying the criteria to each agricultural parcel they will be ranked. A map will be developed as a visual tool to help target programs for farmland protection in White Creek. Ultimately it is the land owner’s decision whether or not to avail themselves of the farmland protection programs.

Perry noted that the Town might want to set up a purchase of development rights program and he was donating his salary to this fund which could potentially off-set some of the legal and administrative closing costs to a farmer of selling development rights. (Perry had suggested that the establishment of a Development Rights program was in motion by the Town Board but following a lengthy discussion among the Steering Committee meeting, it was concluded that it would be premature for the Town to establish the fund and that criteria for ranking farmland should be informed by the comprehensive plan and agricultural protection plan developed with

community input and feedback on the criteria. The plan may recommend establishment of such a local fund.)

Hetko requested that environmental services be ranked higher in the criteria—from 10% to 15%. Wetlands serve as buffers, streams may allow irrigation. It was noted that there will be a separate section in the plan focused on the environment—waterways are important and need to be emphasized in the plan.

Next Steps:

- Nan will bring a map of farmlands prioritized based on criteria established to date. (Including weighting only prime soils and soils of statewide importance as well as using the ranking system for a wide variety of soils produced by Washington County in soils criteria).
- Based on the sub-vision statements developed Nan will provide the Steering Committee for discussion with a list/laundry list of the realm of possible strategies and various options to attain community goals.
- Plans to reach out to the farm community and general public in White Creek will be crystallized at the September meeting.

Next Meeting Weds. July 15th 7:30PM Town of White Creek, 28 Mountain View Drive.