

DRAFT
Town of White Creek
Comprehensive Plan and Ag Protection Plan
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
April 20, 2010

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

Minutes: The minutes of the February meeting will be presented at the next Committee meeting.

Public Meeting and Agricultural Meeting: The committee reflected on the public meeting and the meeting held with farmers in March to receive their comments on the vision statement, strategies and general recommendations. In general participants seemed comfortable with the vision statement, strategies and sub topic recommendations presented. The following points were made pertaining to these topics:

- In general people seemed comfortable with the vision statement for the Town of White Creek. There was some confusion because the Vision Statement uses present verb tenses and essentially reflects an interest in keeping White Creek the way it is currently. The steering committee suggested that the 'preamble' to the vision statement note this more clearly.
- The Village of Cambridge has a vibrant Main Street and White Creek's proximity to this and the offerings in the Village help define its current character. These sentiments including supporting neighboring municipalities and local businesses might be more strongly integrated into the vision statement and strategies.
- With regard to prioritizing farmland a number of farmers questioned some of the parcels that ranked/scored high suggesting that they were too steep to farm. The farmland prioritization criteria do not include slope as a single characteristic. (Slope is considered in the context of soils typically). The definition of agriculture included does include timber and maple sugar. These lands might not be appropriate for crop farming but other types of farming. Following discussion, it was decided to note clearly on the map and in the prioritization that slope is not a singled out factor weighed in the ranking and encourage people to review the definition of agriculture which is diverse when reviewing the ranking. Also, Nan will ask her colleague to provide the raw data for these particular parcels to see if there were any other issues skewing the prioritization work.
- With regard to the definition of agriculture, it should include horticultural products.
- A recommendation should include the town government hosting a website.

Mobile Home Law Audit

Nan had a chance to review the Mobile Home Law in its entirety and noted the following:

- Definitions had to be updated to comply with HUD regulations
- Mobile home parks are part of the law and do have to come before site plan review
- Suggests that the Town Board not issue certificates of occupancy. Ashton consulted with the head of the Washington County Code Enforcement Office and they do issue building permits, inspect and issue certificates of occupancy for mobile homes. She had relayed this information to Supervisor Bob Shay as well and the Town Board was discussing transferring this responsibility to the Code Enforcement Officer.

- The Planning Board could have a role in site plan review of mobile homes rather than the Town Board.
- There were questions about the role of the Town Board in determining violations and serving an order of remedy.

The Committee discussed the need to promote and have a fair share of affordable housing available. The current plan strategies outline this need. To a comment that mobile homes could be prohibited, Nan noted that this was not legal; they can be regulated but not prohibited outright. There was also discussion about suggesting that all single family residential homes go through site plan review not just mobile homes. It was pointed out that mobile homes were singled out. The bar could be raised so that all newly constructed single family homes go through site plan review; the site plan review process allows for public participation and comment. Following discussion the group decided to ask Nan to offer to the group a very minimal modified site plan review for residencies that calls for a review of general set backs, impact on agriculture. The plan would state “consider adding residential site plan review to ensure that basic goals of White Creek are being met.’ It was suggested that this be worded such that such a residential site plan review would not be cumbersome but be reasonable (basic and balanced), looks at some basic environmental issues (like relation to streams, septic systems, and other properties), and impact on agriculture and impacts community character-(which may be a goal beyond which the plan might require). Nan will provide a model for potential inclusion in the appendix.

Table of Contents

Nan handed out a table of contents for the Steering Committee’s consideration noting that sections the vision and goals for the future and portions of the recommended actions were completed. Currently the plan is divided into the following sections: Introduction, Vision & Goals for the Future, Recommended Actions, Implementation Steps and Appendices. It was recommended that the recommended action portion flow by topic from the sub goal section for the economy, agriculture etc. Kinds of actions be integrated by thematic topic. The Implementation Steps will include a table or checklist noting year one, two etc and help organization identify priority areas and resources available to help with implementation.

Appendix A will focus of Farms and Farmland in White Creek and include most of the items relevant to the Agricultural Protection Plan. Nan noted that the Dept of Agriculture wanted to ensure that each Farmland Protection plan also prioritized what the county and state should do. Plans were being turned back without this information. This analysis would inform county and state officials’ planning processes. The Appendix will also include the audits and suggested changes to the site plan review, subdivision, right to farm and mobile home laws. A tool box for future consideration would also be attached. It was suggested that the former Data Collection Phase Report not be included as an appendix in the main Comp Plan document but stay a standalone document as the Comp Plan should not be too long.

The meeting closed with a discussion and debate among committee members about conflict and how to bring out, surface and discuss tensions about differences in opinion about the role/impact of regulations. Moving forward, it was determined in the committee meetings, we should look at the concrete issue before the committee in the context of successfully completing the White Creek comprehensive planning process.

Next Meeting Tuesday, May 18th at 7:30pm in the Town of White Creek Mountain View Drive Offices. Purpose of the meeting is for the committee to learn about land use tools. Nan will make a presentation to committee members.

