

**Town of White Creek
Comprehensive Plan and Ag Protection Plan
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
August 18, 2010**

Attendees: , Jim Perry, Carol Moore, Don Sweet, Sarah Ashton

Absent: Ed Gulley Tim Smith, Rupert Jennings, J. Tudor, Rich Moses, Bill Badgley, Darryl Caputo, Peter Hetko, Rody Walker,

Other attendees: John West

Minutes: The minutes of the July meeting were approved.

Review of Draft Goals and Recommended Actions: The Steering Committee continued its review of the draft goals and recommend actions.

Conservation Subdivisions and Density: As requested, Nan handed out and the committee members reviewed a summary of the discussion of Farmland Protection Action Item #5 related to Conservation Subdivision which the committee at its July meeting suggested might be a useful technique for the Town of White Creek (see attached). The following clarification questions/comments were raised:

- Can you give more of a bonus density if a land owner wants to preserve more than 50% of the land? Yes. Ideally a minimum percentage that must be preserved for every parcel should be established. In many communities it is 50%.
- Does only agricultural land qualify for land preserved under a conservation subdivision? No, in addition to agriculture the community could seek to preserve other environmental features/sensitive areas or other areas through this technique. The community can define categories of open space like stream corridors or slopes. Ultimately the open space must be defined and specific criteria for what kind of open space is to be preserved must be in the conservation subdivision section within the subdivision law. The law should include agricultural land as open space.
- What types of bonus incentives including density bonuses are offered? Nan will provide information about what bonus density incentives 5-6 other communities provide as examples for White Creek to potentially consider. (Tax abatements can be an incentive to promote conservation subdivisions by developers too but may have limited value as the developer typically sells the property.)
- As follow-up to the meeting in July, the committee felt that White Creek in order to ensure the effectiveness of the Conservation Subdivisions, the municipality ought to consider establishing a density for development for major subdivisions. (Not a minimum lot size though). Density is the number of dwelling units per acre and would allow averaging of lot sizes provided the overall density was not exceeded—so that there could be smaller and larger lots.... The committee thought five acre rule might be appropriate. (See example in handout).

Agricultural Buffers: The Committee went on to discuss the Farmland Protection Action Item (which it renumbered #6) related to agricultural buffers. The idea was to have new residential properties near agricultural lands establish a buffer (trees, shrubs or fences on the residential property). Instead of using the term buffer, the committee preferred using ‘set back’ regulations currently in effect and include 50’ from property line and 100’ from stream banks.

Other Farmland Protection Action Items: The following comments were made:

- Item #8 change ‘Consider’ to ‘Reconsider’ establishing a program that connects land sellers in Washington County (rather than just White Creek) to potential farmers. The ‘Come Farm with Us’

program was actually initiated in Washington County when Jim Perry was working with Agricultural Opportunities Committee.

- Item #9 remove ‘promote use of and’ and instead just Assist landowners in development of model leases for non-consumptive uses of farmland (examples recreational leases and hunting leases...) Township might just make sure that some sample model leases are available.
- Item #10 regarding enhancing Planning Board review of projects and how they might impact farms should be moved up to #1 in the section.
- Item #11 concerning establishing lower density of development was discussed in the conservation subdivision and should be incorporated with #5 to reflect committee discussion.

Community Character: The committee moved on to the section about community character and offered the following:

- Edit Objective #1: Develop and support community activities/*events/programs* and citizen participation *that increases community pride, promotes volunteerism and intergenerational interaction.*
- Add a section requiring a residency requirement to seek elected office in the township.
- Add an objective Heighten awareness of and celebrate the history of the community.
- Recommended Actions Item #1 regarding communications between the town and residents—just establish website and include articles in newspaper. (A newsletter would be an added expense.)
- Item #5 with regard to considering local incentives to encourage property owners to rehabilitate historic structures. Add ‘seeking grants’ for rehabilitation of historic properties.
- Item #7 regarding community services. Include a phrase “collaborating with other townships to...” appoint a Task Force to identify additional community services needed...(As there are a Youth Commission that exist and transcend municipal boundaries).
- Item #8 Emergency Preparedness plan—Ashton will check with Mark Spiezio to determine if the County has such a plan in place more broadly.
- DELETE Item #9 about a brochure about rural live in White Creek and #12 about rural siting standards
- Item #10 pertained to whether or not the Town wanted to prohibit uses such as potentially a nuclear power plant. Nan provided information that a community can’t prohibit a power plant—this is part of the reason that wind farms are trying to be designated as power plants so there placement can’t be challenged by local communities. Toxic dumps though are under local control and the committee seemed interested in suggesting this be prohibited. Carol noted that a company in Hoosick Falls which sought to establish a dump on farmland had come back to the town board to discuss the project following rejection a few years before.
- Item #11 concerns considering a less intensive site plan review for all new houses built in White Creek. Currently as discussed previously only mobile homes or those that go through some subdivision are subject to any level of review. Building on that discussion, the committee members thought it in the interest of the community to create a very modest site plan review for residential homes.
- Item #13 regarding considering establishing building design standards for commercial (non-agricultural buildings). This resulted in some discussion which was not concluded as to whether or not there should be a building size cap for retail structures. 1500-2000 sq ft structures could help protect local businesses and could limit big box stores. Sarah is to find out how big Rite Aid in the Village is as a point of comparison. Or if larger commercial buildings should be encouraged to be located in a particular place like near the existing industrial park on Route 22 near the Railroad tracks. The committee was asked to think this issue over as it has not really been discussed and come with ideas to the next meeting.
- John West spoke of the rural quality of the roads in defining town character.

Next Meeting Weds. September 15th at 7:30pm in the Town of White Creek Mountain View Drive Offices. Purpose of the meeting is for the committee to continue to review sub-topic thematic strategies—starting with Environment’ on page 16 and continue to discuss building size cap.