



## **COUNTY FARM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES** **Tuesday, August 19, 2014**

The County Farm Planning Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Dennis Brault, at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 19, 2014, in the County Board Room, of the Vernon County Courthouse Annex.

Members Present: Dennis Brault, JoAnn Nickelatti, Eric Evenstad, Karen Dahl, Bonnie Rath, Bernadine Hornby, and Shawn Redington.

Others in attendance were Greg Lunde, Tena Fredrickson, Herb Cornell, Doug Avoles, Phil Hewitt, and Gail Muller.

**Affirmed proper public notice of meeting.**

**Review/Approve Minutes: Motion by Nickelatti/second by Dahl to approve the July 15, 2014 minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.**

**Audience to Visitors:** None

**Highway update:** Brault stated that the bypass project is on hold and could be indefinitely. Hewitt agreed that is what he had heard as well. Lunde questioned whether the map provided by Avoles was more current than the one on the wall in the County Board room and Avoles stated it shows the access roads and final revisions.

Dahl asked whether the sink holes had actually sunk and Avoles stated he was unsure, but that the yellow dots on the plan are where sinkholes have been located. Hewitt stated that Al Berg has done the water work on the property and is who discovered 3 of them right there at the salt shed facility. Brault questioned the committee and Hewitt about a new highway shop and their thoughts regarding its location. Hewitt stated access to Highway 14 is a priority. Evenstad questioned the interchange on/off ramps and whether there would be guaranteed accessibility to Railroad Avenue, to which Hewitt stated no, that the road would actually be closed. Brault stated if they built in that area, they would need DOT approval for access. Rath inquired as to the amount of traffic that would be increased by the highway shop should it be situated near the current salt shed and Hewitt stated during a typical stormy day, each highway department truck would be in/out of that location at least four times per day.

Cornell reminded the committee to keep in mind the addition of any future additional county buildings that may be built when determining a location for the new Highway Shop. Brault noted that it could include a new services center/campus, which would include all the Erlandson Offices and Banta Buildings alike and then they'll have to decide to maintain or tear down the remaining buildings; plus, he noted, to keep the sink holes in mind. Brault questioned current rental income of the Vernon County farmlands and possible loss of income if those lands were to be used and Hewitt stated that the county currently receives \$84,000 in rental funds for 265 acres of the West farm and \$41,600 for 166 acres on the East farm for a total of \$125,000 a year. Redington asked what ever came of the discussion regarding a new nursing home and why had the county not pursued it and Brault stated that assisted living is what the need is for right now, so a nursing home has become a low priority at this point when looking at the three main projects the County must consider, that being a new nursing home, a new administration building, and a new Highway shop.

Evenstad stated that he sees the probability of a lot of prime real estate development on the north end of the county property when the bypass is built and says the committee should consider that as if a new highway shop was to be built there, eventually it would be smack in the middle of town just as it is now as things build and progress north of the city. Brault inquired as to thoughts on alternative property to build on and Evenstad stated there is a lot of farmland out there, even areas to the east that would make sense as the southwest portion is going to explode if the bypass ever goes through. Hewitt stated not only is the corner of Y and LF avenue out of the main hustle and bustle, but there is also good access to the main road as well as being up high and dry even though it is not county owned. Lunde noted the landfill property is also a sizable chunk of land to consider.

Rath inquired whether locating an administration building away from the city would make any difference in regards to employees and their ease of access, fuel use, and luncheon purposes and Brault stated that is also something to take into consideration. Brault then asked the committee whether a tour of available lands would help guide their thoughts during future discussions and the committee agreed a tour of the county properties might be beneficial.

Rath inquired as to how many acres would be needed for building a county complex or campus, including the highway department buildings, if that was the route determined to go, and Hewitt stated he would not build the main highway shop on less than 10 acres at a bare minimum. Avoles stated that the current Erlandson Office Building sits on 6.96 acres, the Vernon County Sheriff's Office on 8.5, and Vernon Manor on 7.58, plus add in the Land & Water Department, and you've got a sizable amount of land that would be needed to build an all-inclusive county complex.

Rath inquired as to what steps are expected from this committee, and Cornell stated to make recommendations with which the County Board can review from there. Brault stated it is their responsibility to map out recommendations for the location of a new county administration building and Highway Shop.

Hornby questioned why the previous Farm Planning committee of a few years back didn't follow through with any plans and several committee members advised that the previous County Board Chair disbanded the committee, essentially abruptly halting any building plans. Redington noted that if the bypass comes in, Old Hwy 14 traffic will drop way down, so perhaps they should consider looking at keeping the salt shed in its current location as opposed to moving it to a possibly higher congested area of the future. Hewitt agreed that is a great spot, but stated the long term stability of the sink holes in that area are still a consideration and the committee agreed. Cornell stated the County's current facilities are usable for a number of years yet, and Brault agreed they will continue to be functional until such time as a new building is erected and stated the goal is to get some ideas and some funding put aside for a new Highway Department shop possibly within the next five years, and then another new structure five years after that as he would like to see these projects move on within the next 5 to 10 years.

**Next meeting Date:** The committee agreed to meet at the Erlandson Office Building parking lot on Thursday, September 18, at 1:00 p.m.

**Motion by Dahl/second by Rath to adjourn the meeting at 2:04 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.**

Minutes respectfully submitted by: Tena M. Fredrickson, Corporation Counsel Administrative Assistant