



COUNTY FARM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, October 21, 2014

The County Farm Planning Committee meeting was called to order by Chairman Dennis Brault, at 1:02 p.m. on Tuesday, October 21, 2014, in the County Board room of the Courthouse Annex.

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

Others in attendance were Greg Lunde, Tena Fredrickson, Herb Cornell, Steve Clark – Director of Public Works for the City of Viroqua, LaVon Felton – President of the Viroqua Development Association, Jeff Gohlke – Viroqua Development Association Coordinator, John Severson - City Administrator, and Sara Grainger – City Engineer.

Affirmed proper public notice of meeting.

Review/Approve Minutes: Motion by Dahl/second by Nickelatti to approve the September 18, 2014 minutes as written. All in favor. Motion carried.

Brault stated it was not a correction, but merely a notation regarding the previous meetings minutes, that the Seasbranch Dam is not dry, but that it just appears that way. He stated there is approximately 4' – 7' of water depending on your vantage point.

Audience to Visitors: None.

Evenstad informed the city representatives of the reason for their invitation to the meeting, stating that the committee is trying to decipher the best route to take in regards to future county development and the like, looking down the road 5, 10, or 50 years, and it is of his opinion, not to overlook the possibility of a bypass, as the committee has entertained the idea of that being a feasible threat to some of the county lands, and wanted to see what the city's thoughts, ideas, and suggestions were on the subject as the City is a neighboring municipality.

Felton stated that looking down the road several, if not 20-50 years, he believes the bypass will happen in a similar path to the previously considered route and thinks it simply turned into a political thing as the reason for its on-hold status. Felton stated that from the City's standpoint, they look at growth; at kids and jobs, and keeping people here and building businesses, versus letting them go elsewhere. He asked, "What does the city need to do that?", and then stated to have a little land available to offer when someone comes in wanting to build a business here would be what they need to start with, because as encouraging and helpful as the County has been the last few years, it takes time to go through the County level to get things rolling, and most often the time frame simply runs out before it can be accomplished and the business locates elsewhere.

Evenstad stated that the very topic of time-frames and how to decrease that time has been discussed, but there are a lot of issues with that. For instance, just setting aside land at a specific price is an issue because how do you determine a fair price when it is so suggestive; pricing could be much different for someone who comes in with a good game plan of a family supporting business, versus someone who needs it in 30 days for a small venture. Evenstad stated the committee should definitely come up with some how-to's on how to deal with this kind of thing in the future however.

Felton stated the County farm lies where it lies and acknowledged that it is a hindrance to City, as it limits the City's growth, but stated it is what it is, and the City would like the opportunity to help someone who

might want to build here, thereby encouraging growth, and so from that standpoint, would be interested in all areas of discussion surrounding the possibility of getting land from the County, as being able to provide a fast response when someone shows up asking for land seems to be the way to go.

Brault stated everything is moving North and if the bypass comes in, that we all know Walmart and Kwik Trip, etc., are all going to be moving out there too, yet, the County has specific needs for some of the County lands in that area – 3 specific structures; an Administration/Erlandson Building, County Highway shop, and most likely a nursing facility. Brault stated that the rest of the unused lands the county has no interest in or needs to build on in this point in time, are simply being rented out for farm use and isn't pulling in any major dollars for the county nor is it helping the City at all. Brault stated ultimately what the committee is looking for is information on what lands if any the City might be interested in if they were to provide some.

Felton agreed that the something has to be done with the Highway Shop, but stated the property on the corner by Eugene Engh's (left of the town shed) is pretty decent level land the county should probably want to keep as it's far enough out to stay out of the mainstream of any future businesses. Dahl and Felton noted that ADM has mentioned interest in an 80 acre chunk of land for expansion of the grain facilities. Felton stated he agrees with what he'd heard Hewitt had stated about putting the Highway Shop in the upper corner to the North and left of the grain bins as that much acreage would be nice and there would be no worries about other buildings/businesses coming in and building around/near it for a long, long time.

Nickelatti noted that with more development comes more population. Felton stated that 15-20 years ago is when everything started moving to and exploding on the North side of town; Peterson's, Napa, Kwik Trip, the Credit Union, etc., due to tax increment financing (TIF), "because everyone likes free money". He stated the TIF program is a terrific program in that you get 15% back on everything you put in, meaning if the land was worth \$100,000 when you started, and when you get done if it's worth \$500,000, then you get \$400,00 times 15%. Which means the City then hands you a check for \$60,000 and says "here, use this for building". Gohlke stated that it's a pay-as-you go over a ten year period, and that \$10 million worth of development came out of the TIF on the north end of town. Felton stated the bottom line is if someone came in asking for 10 acres for manufacturing, the City just doesn't have it to give, but if they did, that's something they would look at doing for a business that came in. Gohlke said, "Look at main street", residential homes are being rezoned and turned into chiropractor and accountant offices because we are out of places to put normal commercial facilities.

Nickelatti stated that family supporting jobs are what are needed and everyone agreed. Gohlke stated two things are important to foster industrial development, one being availability. You need to have a good mix of properties that are available including infrastructure (water/sewer), not just land stuck out in the middle of nowhere. You need to have infrastructure at the site in order to sell it. Second, is that it can be available in a rather short period of time, not 5 years down the road because businesses are worried about their quarterly returns not what the annual is going to be in 5 years. So basically in order to do a good job of marketing properties, you need both the infrastructure as well as availability.

Lunde asked Gohlke for a copy of VEDA land use restrictions for future use. Gohlke stated he would get him a copy. Hornby questioned the fastest way of getting county land when needed, to the people asking for it and Gohlke said, "Sell it to the City and let them get it out there." Severson stated if you look at economic development, you can't predict the future, so you've got to be flexible, and that takes some hard planning and some big dollars involved to get the infrastructure in place. Gohlke said you can figure about \$200 per lineal foot for water/sewer and pavement alone.

Lunde asked, on behalf of a County Board member, that if the County would survey out the area of the future administration building/megaplex as well as an area the County might be willing to turn over or have available for future sale, and if that were annexed into the City, would the City run all of the infrastructure out there then or no? Severson said no, because the utility side is different from the general fund and it's rate based, and all that expansion until it came back would have to be bore by the City. So

usually in a smaller scenario, the developer is who is going to have to pay for that infrastructure, not that there can't be variations to that.

Lunde stated that the particular Board member that he spoke with wants to retain ownership and not sell it to the City or VDA so that if someone came in looking for land, we could sell it, and Rath questioned what the difference was. Lunde stated his feelings were because they wanted more control over what goes out there. Felton asked if the County were willing to instill a fast response team to meet with potential buyers and also stick in the \$3,000,000.00 in order to make that land saleable? Lunde stated no. Rath stated that if the County complex is moved way out, that the County would bare a huge investment in having to build the infrastructure. Severson stated that the City would look at anything to make things work to growth, it just depends on what's feasible. He also said that multi-jurisdictional TIF's can exist and the possibilities of sharing the risks and rewards could be shared, keeping in mind that when you buy undeveloped land and put it in the TIF, the state decides the value of it.

Felton stated that people focus on a price per acre, but the tax base, economic development and the like are the bigger picture, and that the City isn't about coming in and buying everything up, because they'd probably sell it for less than they bought it for anyways, as they're just trying to do what's best for the area.

Dahl stated that all the stakeholders should be at the table and have a say in this. Redington noted that any township can make a TIF also as it's all been reworked within the last 3-4 years. Felton reiterated that the TIF has been a great thing. Felton also stated that he has tried to go to the County level when something has come up, but projects have been lost because it can't be done in a reasonable timeframe. Felton noted in regards to the fast response team, that Prairie Du Chien has one so that everything doesn't just come unraveled trying to get it all together.

Hornby asked if it was possible for the County to agree to sell 40 acres along highway 14, and have it just sit there until the City finds a buyer (not at a specific price), and Lunde stated the County Board member he has spoken with wants to hold onto the land until a buyer is found. Rath asked if Hornby's inquiry would prevent infrastructure, and Severson stated it could be worked on.

Lunde stated that if Highway were to move to the northeast corner, they could designate it and annex it to the city, and then all that would be left is to run the physical pipelines and things. Felton asked Lunde what the County had for land roughly, 400 acres? And Lunde stated yes, roughly. Lunde asked if the Highway shop moved, what does the City see as use for the current shop? Felton and Gohlke stated the location is a great spot. Severson stated it would be for commercial businesses, not residential or industrial. Lunde stated he would hate to think of what the soils are like there, but there are a lot of funds available for Brownsfield clean up now. Brault stated he liked the idea the area would be zoned commercial.

Felton stated that the City would be interested in 20 acres in front of the sink holes or so, and by the salt shed would be a good spot too. Dahl stated she spoke with Doug Avoles of GIS, and discovered it would cost a lot of money to see what's underground, but suggested maybe there is a grant available for the purpose of finding out. Grainger stated everyone might be surprised at the amount of information already available (regarding LiDAR information). Grainger stated that Viroqua for example, is 3 aquaphors down, so hopefully it takes a very long time. Currently, she stated they discharge out to Springville, and the DNR has sked to pipe water there rather than how they do it now because of those upper aquaphors. She stated the DNR is well aware of storm water runoff and so they require a lot of attention to that.

Evenstad stated he is hearing a want for a mechanism to be in place for quick sales, and asked what is needed to accomplish that. Felton stated that first is a call to Chairman Cornell to get the ball rolling, but the ball rolls slow. Evenstad asked if it were a deterrent to have to do that knowing it will never happen? Felton stated it has gotten better as the years have gone by, but basically, yes. Gohlke stated it can just never get to the closing; it all unravels first. He said that to have 29 people agree is hard, but what they

need to realize that if a company comes into Viroqua, people are going to be driving from all over the county to get to that job, so it is not just benefitting the people of the City of Viroqua.

Felton said if the committee made a resolution to sell a 20 acre parcel, that would be a great beginning to development. Lunde stated that this committee has no authority to do that as it is only an advisory committee. Severson asked if someone came in with a serious interest, it would be nice to know how long it would take to get it done. Lunde stated the problem is that County Board members simply don't have enough time to review these things even if the Chair calls a special meeting as they only meet six times per year. Brault suggested a joint meeting with Buildings and Facilities and committee agreed that would be a good idea.

Felton stated, "This is so simple. The City needs to buy 20 acres from the County so they can sell it to people that need it." Cornell stated getting 20 acres to the City shouldn't be too much of a problem.

Felton stated their first choice of lands would probably be land east of Highway 14, north of the motel:
Parcel# 036-00809-0000 17.73 acres out of the waterway along Highway 14. The W1/2 of that 40, excepting the NE1/2 NW1/4.
Parcel# 036-00810-0000 6.02 acres. The W1/2 of that parcel. He stated this choice would be zoned commercial.

And the second choice they'd be most interested in is East of Railroad Avenue and the salt sheds:
Parcel# 036-00819-0000 19.67 acres, which would be zoned industrial.

Next meeting Date: It was decided to hold a joint meeting with the Buildings & Grounds Committee and City of Viroqua Administrators on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 at 9:30 a.m.

Motion by Nickelatti/Second by Dahl to adjourn the meeting at 2:53 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

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