

Marquette County Farmland Preservation Steering Committee

April 9, 2015

6:00 PM

Public Safety Room 103

Members present: Jim Kruger, Suzie Seehaver, Al Gibeaut, Karl Spath, Jim Sanders, Richard Gumz, Meagan Hoffman, Pat Kilbey

Others present: Tom Onofrey, Dustin Grant, Mark Roffers, Colette Spranger

1. The Acting Chair, Al Gibeaut, called the meeting to order. The committee recited the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. Motion/2nd by Sander/Spath to approve agenda. Motion carried unanimously.
3. Motion/2nd by Seehaver/Gumz to approve minutes of previous meeting. Motion carried unanimously.
4. Mark Roffers gave a recap of the planning process to date. He stated they had been working with the Towns to put together their Farmland Preservation (FP) Maps. He also stated that the next Steering Committee meeting will be in late summer.
5. The local quadrant meetings were held in late January. All municipalities participated. Mark explained the content of those meetings. He also discussed the work each Town needed to do. First, they needed to make their Planned Land Use maps. They then needed to decide if they were participating in Farmland Preservation (FP). If they were, then they needed to make a FP map. Tom Onofrey stated that the biggest issue some Towns are facing is that they want FP but do not currently have Ag-1 zoning. They are trying to gain input from residents who are weighing the benefits between participating in FP and the requirement of a 35 acre minimum lot size. Tom further gave an overview of where each Town stands on Ag-1 zoning.
6. Mark reviewed the draft Agricultural Resources chapter of the Comprehensive Plan in great detail. The FP plan will make up the bulk of the Ag Resources chapter. As Mark went through the chapter, the Committee gave numerous suggestions on ways to improve the chapter. The suggestions are as follows:

- A. Add what the definition of a farm is;
- B. Change any reference of Working Lands Initiative to Farmland Preservation;
- C. The WHIP program was absorbed into the EQIP program;
- D. Mr. Gumz stated that commodity prices have been falling for the last two years with no end in sight;
- E. There are three mint farms;
- F. Add the Endeavor Slaughterhouse and Gumz Farms Produce packaging facility to the list of Agriculture businesses.
- G. Pat Kilbey suggested to tie in the natural resources and education section to this chapter (Pat will write this part);
- H. Add something about DATCP, and maybe DOR, providing info about tax credits and what is required to obtain them.
- I. Remove section on 1000+ unit farms and add as a line item in policy notes;

The Committee discussed numerous topics throughout the meeting. A very in-depth discussion occurred about what is a family farm and should it be stated that way in the plan. Ultimately, the Committee felt that while basically all farms are “family farms”, the wording is important for community support and therefore should stay in the plan. The Committee also discussed the trend of pressure to converting farmland.

Mark discussed the Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. He also explained how the FP plan ties into this chapter. He talked in detail about the proposed requirements for dividing property. A slide with 3 rezone options was presented. The Committee felt that they were redundant and unnecessary. They decided to remove the “rezone 40 acres” and the “farmland consolidation” options. The graph and plan were then reduced to requiring a rezoning of 1-5 acres for a home site. The balance of the 40 would remain unbuildable.

The Committee further discussed the requirement that dwellings be screened from view from the road. They decided this was unnecessary and removed it from the plan.

They also discussed the “Right to Farm” notice requirement on survey maps. The Committee chose to leave this requirement in place.

7. No public present.

8. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.