



PLANNING AND ZONING DEPARTMENT

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To: Portage County Farmland Preservation Ad-Hoc Steering Committee
From: Steve Kunst, Associate Planner
Date: February 6, 2015
Re: Discussion Items for the February 12th Meeting

Since the January meeting of the Ad-Hoc Committee, staff has been busy generating a number of items for you to review and comment, as well as a new resource for getting information out to everyone. Just as with the first meeting, we have a full agenda. We are looking to you for feedback on initial draft plan text and some important farm operations. Also, we want to make sure the group has a decent understanding of the State tax credit program. This understanding will make the process of generating the County's Farmland Preservation Area Map much smoother.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN WEBSITE!

We have created a special, one-stop-shop, website containing information related to the County Farmland Preservation Plan. On it you can find all meeting materials, a list of Steering Committee members and staff working on the project. This also allows us to share pertinent news stories and articles as well as hear from you! The site itself has a comment section; so for instance, those unable to attend meetings are able to share their thoughts with the group. You can also sign up to get email notifications as new content is posted. If you get the chance before the meeting, take a tour of the site. We are continuing to add information and improve the layout, but feel free to let us know what you think. We hope you find this as a valuable resource.

<https://pocofarmlandpres.wordpress.com/>

INITIAL PLAN TEXT

The draft plan text found in your packet begins by introducing both the State program and the Farmland Preservation Plan before getting into the County's agricultural history and some initial agriculture statistics. During our initial conversation in January it was asked that staff create a timeline of major events in agriculture. Using a combination of the old plan, Malcom Rosholt's *Our County Our Story*, and other literature we've assembled a timeline graphic within the draft Plan; please review what and come prepared with anything else you feel needs mentioning. You may notice all tables and figures are labeled with an 'x'. This is intentional. As we continue to adjust the Plan, items may move around, so rather than assign a number right away, we will wait until the Plan is a bit more finalized.

STATISTIC QUESTIONS FOR THE COMMITTEE

As we reviewed some of the statistical information from the US Department of Agriculture's Ag Census we had a couple of questions we hope the Committee is able to clarify. For one, on page

7, the numbers show a spike in the number of farms between 1997 and 2002, but staff are seeking your input on what may have caused this. What are your thoughts?

Second, overall land in farms was consistently declining between 1987 and the late 1990's (page 7), but jumped dramatically by 2002. We are looking for some insight on the cause of this spike as well.

GOALS AND POLICIES FROM 1985 PLAN

Also included in your packet are the goals and policies from the 1985 Farmland Preservation Plan, representing the County's original commitment to the future of agriculture. Part of this Committee's charge in updating the Plan will be to review, update and/or add to this list. We will not necessarily cover these in our upcoming meeting, but we wanted to give you a sense early on of how goals and policies fit into the Plan.

CONCLUSION

I hope all of the information you received this week helps in your preparation for the meeting on the 12th. We will be meeting at the Buena Vista Town Hall at 6:00 PM. The Town Hall can be found at 6684 County Road BB, Bancroft WI, 54921. As always, feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns. I can be reached at kunsts@co.portage.wi.us or the phone number listed at the top of the document.