

Chippewa County Land Conservation
Committee Meeting
February 21, 2008

The meeting was called to order by the Chair, P. Michels, at 9:00 a.m. Members present were D. Boettcher, M. Holte, P. Licht, P. Michels, and L. Willkom.

Members absent were J. Dahl and L. Marquardt.

Agency staff present at times throughout the meeting were T. Lindsay (NRCS), J. Myers (FSA), W. H. Reynolds (Co. Administrator), R. Brown (Zoning), M. Dahlby, D. Masterpole, and J. Schemenauer - Recorder (LCD).

Members of the public present were S. Hilger and R. Smith.

Item #1 – Approve Minutes.

The minutes from the 1/17/08 meeting were presented. Motion to approve the 1/17/08 minutes: Boettcher/Willkom. Motion carried.

Item #2 – Review the Membership and Powers of the Land Conservation Committee, as Established in Wis. Stats., 92; Identify and Discuss Issues of Concern or Points of Clarification as They May Apply to the Chippewa County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 1 and 2.

D. Masterpole distributed and the Committee reviewed the following material:

1. Sections 92.06 and 92.07 of Wis. Stats. These sections establish the creation, membership, and powers of the Land Conservation Committee.
2. Analysis titled: Results of Staff Review of Amendments to Chapters 1 and 2 of the Chippewa County Code of Ordinances as They Regard the Land Conservation Committee, (LCD 2/20/08). The analysis concludes:
 - A. As proposed in the ordinance, the County LCC is a statutory committee with members appointed by the County Board Chair.
 - B. The membership and composition of the committee is set forth in Wis. Stats. 92.06(b).

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The role of the Administrator and County Board Chair in appointing members to the standing committees and statutory bodies of county government, as proposed.
2. The membership and powers of the LCC, as established in Wis. Stats. 92.06 and 92.07.
3. The duties and responsibilities of the LCC in Chippewa County, including its historic function as a seven (7) member policy and coordinating body.
4. The composition and function of the LCC under different types of combined committee structures, as administered in Wisconsin.

Item #3 – Review Agricultural Ad Hoc Committee Report; Discuss Process for Evaluating and Advancing Report Recommendations.

The Committee reviewed a report titled: Chippewa County Agricultural Ad-Hoc Committee, Final Report, January 29, 2008, (distributed with 2/15/08 meeting mailing).

The Committee was created as an ad hoc advisory committee “to study and review possible solutions to protect the farmlands of Chippewa County from the pressures of development and to minimize conflicts within the agricultural district”.

The recommendations of the report are summarized as follows:

-Recommendation #1 – The County should actively advocate for farming as an industry and for the voluntary preservation of agricultural land. The committee recommends the County create a budget utilizing local, state, and federal resources to develop the following recommendations.

-Recommendation #2 – The County should actively inform and educate the public of:

- The importance of agriculture to the County’s economy.
- The importance of preserving blocks of agricultural land for sustainable/future production.
- The direct and indirect costs of developing agricultural lands. In addition, the County should systematically evaluate, measure, and communicate those costs on a basis as development occurs.

-Recommendation #3 – The County should support the efforts of those landowners and agricultural producers that have expressed interest in preserving the farms that they own and manage. Public resources (money, technical services, etc.) should be allocated for individual or groups of contiguous landowners who are ready, willing, and able to voluntarily preserve their farms through the use of conservation easements and low density production agricultural zoning.

-Recommendation #4 – The County should seek to assure that the full costs of dividing land, reviewing development proposals, and developing the public road infrastructure in agricultural production areas is assigned to those initiating the development.

-Recommendation #5 – The County should allocate resources to review the idea of a voluntary incentive preservation program, with program oversight provided by an appointed board.

P. Licht and S. Hilger, co-chairs of the Ad-Hoc Committee, acknowledged the contributions made by its citizen members, and encouraged the County to advance the recommendations.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The current rate of rural development in Chippewa County and the effect on agriculture.
2. Measures that can be taken immediately by the County (using existing resources), to advance the recommendations.
3. The anticipated long-term costs and funding sources that could be used to advance the recommendations.

The Zoning Committee will advance the report to the County Board.

Item #4 – Review the Purpose of a “Conservation Registry” and Policy Options for Incorporating a Registry into Land Preservation Programs.

M. Dahlby presented and the Committee reviewed:

1. Figure titled: Purpose, Core Elements, and Responsibilities, as Proposed Under Chippewa Co. Wild Lakes Initiative, (LCD 1/17/08). The figure illustrates options available to landowners who may have an interest in either: a. Donating land (or a conservation easement); or b. Selling land (or a conservation easement) to a public agency through fee title transfer.
2. Handout titled: Purpose of a “Conservation Registry” and Applicable County Land Preservation Program, (2/21/08). The handout defines:
 - The purpose of a “Landowner Registry”.
 - The benefits which can be realized by the landowner and the administering agency.
 - Ways a registry could be used to pursue resource management objectives in Chippewa County.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. The public costs and benefits of each form of protection (conservation easement –vs- fee title transfer).
2. The public costs and benefits of establishing a registry.

Item #5 – Overview of the County Comprehensive Planning Process and Requirements of the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element; Discuss the Role of County Committees and Departments in Preparation of that Element.

R. Brown distributed and the Committee reviewed the following material:

1. Flowchart titled: Proposed Comprehensive Plan Process Chippewa County, (SEH 2/5/08). The flowchart outlines the dates and actions to be completed by individual communities and the County under Phase I and Phase II of the comprehensive plan process.
2. Section of the WI DOA comprehensive plan checklist titled: Section 2: Contents of a Comprehensive Plan – 9; Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element. The minimum content required for this element is a compilation of County objects, policies, goals, maps, and programs for the conservation, and promotion of the effective management of natural resources.
3. Memorandum to D. Clary (Zoning Dept.), from D. Carlson (SEH), (1/9/08), conveying the scope of work for the comprehensive planning process.

There was general discussion. Discussion focused on:

1. Procedures for LCC’s input and involvement in the Agricultural, Natural, and Cultural Resources Element.
2. The public participation process.
3. The planning schedule and plan implementation date.

Item #6 – Consider Acknowledgement of the Chippewa County Stewardship Program, as Recognized Through the Trust for Public Land and National Association of Counties (NACo), Conservation Leadership Award Program.

D. Masterpole introduced R. Smith, board member of the Chippewa County Conservancy, Inc.

R. Smith reported that the Chippewa County Conservancy, Inc. and the Chippewa Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever have nominated Chippewa County for a County Leadership in Conservation Award, sponsored through the National Association of Counties (NACo), and the Trust for Public Land.

The nomination was submitted to acknowledge the commitments made by the Chippewa County Board, over the past ten (10) years, to advance community-based land conservation activities through the Chippewa County Stewardship Fund. As a result of the nomination, the County has been chosen as one of three counties in the “Small County” category (<150,000 population), that is to be recognized in 2008.

There was general discussion.

Discussion focused on the type, number, and location of projects completed through the County Stewardship Fund Program, as sponsored by local municipalities and nonprofit organizations.

The Chair thanked R. Smith for the nomination and acknowledgement.

Item #7 – Distribute LCC Activities Report (2006-2007).

D. Masterpole distributed a draft plan titled: Chippewa County Land Conservation Committee – A Report of Activities, 2006 – 2007, (LCD 2/12/08).

A final draft of the report will be completed and provided to the LCC.

Item #8 – Review of Summary of Plans/Contracts/Agreements. Public Wishing to be Heard.

There were no plans or contracts presented.

J. Myers (FSA) reported he had prepared information, at the Committee’s request, regarding the current CRP rental rates. The Chair requested that the report be deferred until the next LCC meeting.

Item #9 – The Land Conservation Committee will convene into closed session according to WI Statutes 19.85(1)(c) to consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data on any public employee over which the government body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility.

Motion to adjourn the regular session at 11:00 a.m.: Willkom/Holte. Motion carried.

Motion to go into closed session according to WI Statutes 19.85(1)(c) to consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data on any public employee which the government body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility: Willkom/Holte. Roll call vote. Voting yes: D. Boettcher, M. Holte, P. Licht, P. Michels, and L. Willkom. Motion carried.

Motion to come out of closed session at approximately 11:50 a.m. to announce any action taken: Licht/Boettcher. Roll call vote: Voting yes: D. Boettcher, M. Holte, P. Licht, P. Michels, and L. Willkom. Motion carried.

No action was taken in closed session.

The next LCC meeting was scheduled for Thursday, March 20, 2008, at 3:30 p.m.

Motion to adjourn: Holte/Boettcher. Motion carried..

The meeting was adjourned at approximately at 11:50.