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Sauk County Comprehensive Plan
Steering Committee Meeting Notes
Reedsburg Public Library
December 17, 2008

Committee Members Present: Blakeslee, Borleske, Brown, Dalhoff, Davis, Gerdman, Green, Iausly, Jones, Knight, Kriegl, Ladas, Lanter, Murray, Robkin and White.

Others Present: Mark Steward, Dave Tremble, and Brian Simmert, Sauk County Dept. of Planning and Zoning; Marty Krueger, Sauk County Board of Supervisors, Dan Brown and Jon Warner, Ho-Chunk Nation, and one member of the public.

Mark Steward, Planning and Zoning Director, called the meeting to order at 6:40 pm, and asked members to review the agenda. The agenda was adopted by consensus as written.

Steward asked members to review draft minutes from both the November and October, 2008 Steering Committee meetings. Kriegl moved to approve the minutes from both meetings as written, second by Murray. **Motion Carried.**

Public Comment

Marty Krueger mentioned the loss of several Steering Committee members and announced the nomination of four additional citizens to fill those seats, Shirley Tollaksen, to represent the Lake Delton / Wisconsin Dells area, Tom Broughton, Chair of the Town of Westfield, and Joe Prem, Chair of the Town of Franklin. He also introduced Dan Brown, Vice President of the Ho-Chunk Nation, as the new tribal representative to the Steering Committee.

Tom Kriegl commented favorably on Gil Gerdman's presentation to the County Board on December 16. Gerdman briefly described his presentation. He commented on the interest expressed by Board Supervisors in issues related to planning along the USH 12 corridor.

Brian Simmert briefed members on recent changes to the Comprehensive Planning website. The Issue Reports are now posted, with a links to a Comments Forum. Staff encouraged members to email the URL of the webpage to their community contacts, to increase the number of hits on the website and encourage comments from the public.

The Committee then listened to brief reports from each of the Issue subgroups. Peter Murray spoke for the Agriculture and Natural Resources group. He emphasized the trend toward thinking of agricultural property and natural resources as "Working Lands" with critical economic as well as environmental importance to Sauk County, and that more people must be informed as to the meaning of "working lands." He said more information is also needed to clarify the idea of "family farms", and identified health care and income both as an important farm issues. Murray's report identified sustainable use of resources and the need to strike a balance among competing uses as a fundamental challenge.

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Ben Jones reported for the Economic sub group. He addressed the issue of poverty in Sauk County as both an urban and rural problem. Economic diversity is another issue addressed by the Economy subgroup. Adaptability to changing conditions is critical, and education is key to preparing citizens to adapt. Cultural adaptation involves introducing the community to new ideas and lifestyle choices, and offering a more diverse cultural and economic environment to attract business and workers to locate in Sauk County. The focus on immigration as a cultural threat sometimes obscures focus on the issue of emigration and the loss of talented young people to other areas with more to offer. Jones emphasized the need to identify our community values as a means to focus resources and energies on those things we deem most important. The report also included a treatment of energy issues, primarily on identifying ideas for local energy efficiency and production.

Alan Green reported for the Government subgroup. He reported that some confusion exists among the public about the regulatory process, and that there appears to be some conflict among units of government and various jurisdictions in the administration of those regulations. Alan also mentioned that the public does not fully understand the legal status of the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Government subgroup addressed the issue of implementing existing disaster management plans, particularly in terms of the lack of clarity in what conditions or events would trigger effective responses from those responsible for taking emergency action. The subgroup used the flood events of June 2008 as an example of a confused emergency response. Alan also discussed the overall lack of understanding among elected officials as to the history and function of government institutions.

Nick Ladas then reported for the Quality of Life subgroup. Regarding health care in Sauk County, Nick reported that the availability of health care is potentially threatened by the loss of qualified health care professionals, whose numbers are affected by low compensation, and by the movement of professionals away from general practice to more lucrative health care specializations. Nick discussed Transportation and Housing as Quality of Life issues. Public transportation is not widely available in rural areas. Housing affordability is affected by the recent trend toward building large, expensive houses. Community services are affected by rising costs, increasing demand, and a changing demand. Lo-tech outreach efforts will reach more people.

Doug Blakeslee reported on Transportation issues. The three issues include Infrastructure, bicycle paths and airports. The USH 12 corridor is an area that demands careful planning. The USH 12 Corridor Growth Management Plan should be incorporated into the Sauk County Comprehensive Plan. The functions of highways should be re-examined, as well as the impacts of commercial development on highways. Concern was expressed for the low numbers of passengers per vehicle on USH 12. Doug discussed airport planning and utilization, the issue of the rail line through the Badger Army Ammunition Plant, the alternative use of school buses as a general transportation resource, and the viability of mass transit in Sauk County. Finally, the transportation

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subgroup addressed the county's transportation infrastructure in terms of its age, condition, funding and levels of service.

Brian Simmert then briefed members on the overall list of 29 issues originally identified by the Committee through the Leadership Survey conducted last summer. Simmert asked members if any of the 29 issues had not been addressed adequately through the recent set of reports.

Ben Jones suggested that the Committee should review the intent of the Leadership Survey to clarify feedback on the issue of immigration. Carolyn Davis thought the issue of education and school funding needs more attention. Erv Borleske mentioned the arts as an important cultural need. Karen Lanter raised the issue of taxes, and Fred Iausly suggested that the real issue that people want to know is "what are we getting for our money?" Gene Robkin referred members to a website sponsored by Northstar Economics" as a good source of information on taxes in Wisconsin. Gene Dalhoff suggested that the Committee and the County demonstrate leadership and innovation by exercising some control over just how the taxes are collected, allocated and spent. Gil Gerdman offered that the term "taxes" is not the right focus. Other states and counties have different ways of raising funds to support services. Doug Blakeslee suggested that each subgroup address the impact of taxes and funding in their particular area.

After a brief break, the Committee heard Dave Tremble describe a recent report issued by the Thrive multi-county team. He distributed the Executive Summary of the Assets and Opportunities Study issued the previous week, and quickly scanned the contents. Tremble referred members to the Thrive website, at www.Thrivehere.org, and suggested taking a good look at the report. Doug Blakeslee followed that with his own report of the public event featuring the Thrive Assets and Opportunities report, and suggested that Committee members go to the Thrive website and download the full report. Gene Dalhoff mentioned that Thrive is focusing on the first three opportunities identified in the report, leaving to the individual communities the chance to focus efforts on the other four opportunities.

Mark Steward then briefed members on the status of the public survey project. The Guiding Coalition is scheduled to meet Friday December 19 to identify survey objectives. Steward has been in contact with U.W. - River Falls survey research staff.

Steward touched on the proposed Vision conference, and identified March 31, 2008 as the probable event date. Various location were considered, he reported, but the CAL Center at Reedsburg High School was tentatively selected for its central location and the quality of the facility. Steward will contact the Center to reserve the space. Members discussed promotion of the event, the need for trained facilitators to manage the sessions and experts to participate. Steward reported that he had been in contact with Richard Longworth to serve as the keynote speaker for the event. Mr. Longworth is a Senior Fellow at the Global Chicago Center, and author of Caught in the Middle, an analysis of issues facing midwestern communities.

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Brian Simmert briefed members on a new planning process timeline produced by Jenny Erickson, and asked members to review the draft and comment at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Public Comment

None

Next Meeting: Wednesday January 28, 2009, and will be held at the Sauk County West Square Building in Baraboo.

The meeting adjourned by consensus at about 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark Steward, Director
Sauk County Dept. of Planning and Zoning