

DRAFT MINUTES



CITY OF FITCHBURG

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MINUTES

Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Tuesday, December 15, 2015

Members Present: Ed Kinney, Roger Cohee, Tony Hartmann, Bill Horns, Tom Thrall, and George Vroman

Staff Present: Wade Thompson – Resource/Project Planner

1. Call to Order and Approval of Minutes

Chair Ed Kinney called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Motion by Roger Cohee, second by Bill Horns, to approve the minutes of October 5, 2015, carried unanimously.

2. Public Appearances – Non-agenda items

Mayor Steve Arnold spoke of his interest in both the Yahara WINS Inter-governmental Agreement and the Fitchburg Agriculture Route Concept Analysis Project. Arnold stated he wouldn't be able to stay for the agenda items but would view the discussion on the items at a later date.

3. Yahara WINS Inter-governmental Agreement – Rick Eilertson, City of Fitchburg and Dave Taylor, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District

Wade Thompson stated that the Yahara WINS Inter-governmental Agreement concept was introduced to the Committee in August and that this agenda item was intended as an introductory informational session. Thompson stated the agreement would be referred out to the Committee from City Council at some point in 2016 for further discussion and analysis.

Rick Eilertson, the City's Environmental Engineer, provided a brief overview of the City's involvement in the Yahara WINS project thus far. Eilertson stated the City has been involved for the past couple years in the adaptive management pilot project to reduce the phosphorus load in the Yahara Watershed and meet State of Wisconsin requirements.

Dave Taylor, Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, provided further detail on the Yahara WINS project, stating the intent was to expand the pilot project and work cooperatively with various

DRAFT MINUTES

parties (Cities, Villages, Towns, agricultural landowners, etc.) in the Yahara Watershed, to reduce phosphorus load in the watershed through an adaptive management strategy. Taylor stated this strategy focuses on developing and implementing agricultural practices to reduce phosphorus load in water resources, as opposed to building new “brick and mortar” facilities to treat these resources.

Taylor stated that an adaptive management pilot project, Yahara Pride, was developed four years ago in the northern part of the Yahara Watershed. Taylor stated the project has met expectations, with the success of the project resultant from involvement from agricultural landowners. Taylor also provided a few examples of agricultural practices and strategies utilized in the pilot project, including “harvestable buffers”. Taylor also stated that agricultural landowner involvement in the project, and the proposed Inter-governmental Agreement, is completely voluntary.

Taylor stated that in meeting State requirements for reducing phosphorus load in the State’s waterways, the cost for the adaptive management strategy would be less than the “brick and mortar” option. Taylor stated the Yahara WINS Inter-governmental Agreement, which expands the pilot project throughout the whole Yahara Watershed, and would include interested parties throughout the watershed, including the City, offers an “out” every five years, if said parties wish to not take further part in the agreement.

Eilertson clarified costs to the City on both the pilot project and the Inter-governmental Agreement, as coming from the stormwater utility and City rate payers.

Chair Kinney asked Taylor how the City’s phosphorus load is allocated, and how that relates to the broader regional phosphorus load and the region’s lakes. Taylor provided further detail on how phosphorus load is calculated and associated “treatment” costs. Taylor also clarified that manure digesters alone will not address the phosphorus load issues.

Vroman asked about the make-up of the committee that would provide oversight on the Inter-governmental Agreement. Taylor provided clarification on the make-up of the committee, including an Executive Committee and a Committee of the Whole, consisting of various relevant parties including Cities, Villages, Towns, and agricultural landowners.

4. Fitchburg Agriculture Route (FAR) – Concept Analysis Project – UW-Madison Graduate Program in Urban and Regional Planning

Professor Alfonso Morales, UW-Madison Department of Urban and Regional Planning (URPL), provided an overview of the recent partnership between the City and URPL, and thanked the City for the partnership. Thompson also relayed thanks to URPL and stated tonight’s presentation was an initial step in the FAR Concept Analysis Project. Thompson stated he would work on editing the student draft of the project and present the final project to the Committee in early 2016 for further Committee discussion.

Matt Sorensen and Phil Rynish, URPL master’s degree students, provided an overview of the FAR Concept Analysis Project. Sorensen and Rynish stating they have been working on the project since September. Sorensen and Rynish provided detail on the City’s demographics, indicating the City has seen large population increases in the recent past, and has a diverse population base. Sorensen and Rynish went on to state that the City’s large agricultural land base, the Badger State Trail, and proximity to urban markets, offered a unique opportunity for enhancement of the City’s agricultural community, economy and identity, through development of the FAR project.

DRAFT MINUTES

Sorensen and Rynish identified various recommendations, resultant from a rigorous public participation process that included feedback from City agricultural landowners, regional agricultural-related entrepreneurs, and City officials. The recommendations included those related to land use, placemaking, transportation, natural resources, and administrative/branding/community engagement.

Horns stated that he thought wetland resources could be utilized to enhance the FAR concept and provide public outdoor recreation opportunities.

The Committee discussed various issues related to the FAR concept, including appropriate land uses, landowner engagement and opportunities, marketing and promotion, encouraging small-scale agriculture, trail parking, maintenance, landscaping, safety, and access, ag-tourism “anchor” tenants, a distribution center, pooling resources/implements, and agriculture education. The Committee thanked Professor Morales and the URPL students for their initial work on the FAR project.

5. Staff Report

None.

6. Announcements.

None.

a. Next Meeting Date

The next Committee meeting was scheduled for 4:00 p.m., January 19, 2015.

7. Adjournment

Motion by Hartmann, second by George Vroman, to adjourn at 7:00 p.m., carried unanimously.

Submitted by: Wade Thompson, Resource/Project Planner

Approved: