

**Present:** Pete Russo, Jerry Teague, Charles Ortman, Donna Williamson, Joe Rose, Gary Mertig, George Mika

**Excused:**

**Others:** Tom Waby, Donald Vitea, Tom Fratt, Jeff Ehrhardt, Jim Brennan

#### Call to Order

Pete Russo called the meeting to order at 5:29pm.

#### Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion by Jerry Teague to approve the May 23, 2016 meeting minutes as presented. Second by Charles Ortman. Motion carried.

#### Comprehensive Plan Review Process Overview

Tom W. gives a short overview of the comprehensive planning process for the County

- *Question* about how towns implement their comprehensive plans (consistency with the county?) What happens if towns do not go forward with their own comprehensive plan updates? Example given: what about mining? *Answer:* not mutually exclusive and fluid document goals and objectives are not specific and open to interpretation, county will work with towns, flex in every comp plan...direction to go in
- *Question:* is this comp plan like zoning? Can towns be more restrictive, but not less than county plan? *Answer:* plan doesn't have the strength of an ordinance, just suggestions how the community can act
- *Question:* Can Town plan differ strongly from County Plan? *Answer:* no, must come to consensus, check legality and put in FAQ on UW Extension website

#### Farmland Preservation Plan Update

- Tom F. gives a short overview of the farmland preservation planning process for the county

#### Public Comments

- Motion by Donna to give public time to comment on transportation, and cultural and natural resource discussion outside of public comment period. Second by Charlie.

#### Transportation Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps: Background

- Tom W. gives brief overview of transportation background document
  - Additions: traffic counts, map showing locations of traffic counts, maps on walk/bike routes (recommended to check with parks department), safe routes to school, BART, highway projects and maintenance, challenges to road upkeep

- Looking for pavement conditions (comment that town road conditions on WSLR...Pacer ratings)
- Air transportation: still needs updates
- Should snow trails be in a stand alone recreation chapter, or in natural resource section instead?
- Emmer Shields (Ashland County highway commissioner)
  - Overview of discussion on comprehensive update: agrees with current updates. Few things worth taking different angles on. When talking about road classifications, it has become obvious that road system linked together. Needs understanding that must look at state, county and local roads together and how they connect.
  - *Question:* if comprehensive plan had it right, what would you add?  
*Answer:* would like to see cooperation between different levels of government. → Action step: bring together different players from different jurisdictions for increased cooperation
  - One of the big problems we have is freight volume and its influence on roads (raw forest products). Proponent of rail transit. Is there a viable solution? Designate certain freight hauling routes for more money to get up to freight loading standards. Issue: where are raw forest products coming from? → Action step. Also problem of enforcement
  - *Question:* Highway 13 from Ashland to Marengo redoing culverts?  
*Answer:* Yes, culverts in 2017 and pave in 2018
  - Want to cut down on road damage, need to watch load limits. Example Michigan road limits on Highway 2 differ from Ashland
  - Build highways for trucks, not cars when building roads up here
  - *Question:* can towns enforce these weight limits?
  - Issue (public comment): road county handed over to town needs upkeep, where does money come from...will convert to gravel
  - No road lasts forever (construction every 40-50 years) Overlay (25 years)
    - County (overlay on 50 year cycle, construction on 100 year cycle)
    - Bell curve of cost of road construction → background document?
  - Paser ratings: rates roads and then has plan for road when it reaches certain number. In paser system “fair” is a overlay situation (doesn’t mean good)
  - One thing that zoning can do (or comp plan) can think about what kind of loads you are generating for particular industry → look at transportation services for particular industries (ex. Plumbing company on highway C gets deliveries via a semi) → Needs cooperation between zoning and highway!
  - Road repair is expensive
  - Like to see county and locals work more closely together (engineering help example)
  - Issue now is obtaining federal funding for county

- Ashland one of the only counties that prohibits recreational vehicles e.g. ATVs
- Misconception about what county highway dept. does in connection with the state
- Tom Waby from Bay Area Rural Transit (BART) comments on mass transit
  - Dealing with federal and state grants and seven local governments in partnership with BART, and keeping it economically feasible (funding from state and federal grants down to 57% from 70(?)%)
  - Buses run 360,000 miles a year. Currently use light duty buses (250,000 miles maybe out of each bus)
  - Grant applications rejected for two buses from state, only get 1...this trend will continue
  - Tier B systems: population 50,000-200,000 e.g. Oshkosh, Appleton (all having same issues with funding transit)
  - What should be included in comp plan? Added service in Price County (Park Falls similar to Washburn and blue goose). Expansion of services from 2009 (ARRA grant, federal money) → included new facility 3 years ago.
  - Since 2002 about 14,000 riders/year → 59,000 in 2015 (with additional services). Created partnerships with Bad River Transit, Ashland County Aging Unit, Bayfield County Friday bus service, Laurie Jean Zach Center
  - Trends for this area: aging population and impact on transportation demands → need to be prepared to provide these services and ability to age in place
  - Must coordinate services with other regional transit operators and get as much transportation on the road as we can. Borders are our enemies
  - Need to keep fares down and affordable (work efficiently with resources)
  - Action step → Formally create regional transit authority (umbrella organization) (law currently does not allow us to create an RTA, but can support regionalized transit in comprehensive plan to try to convince legislators)

#### Transportation Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps: Brainstorm

- What do you think of the goal?
  - Overly broad and general, maybe more than one goal. On other hand, like the goal being broad enough to allow specifics to be put into objectives and action steps
  - Do you think this goal stands ten years later?
  - Quality of life aspect but also economic aspect needed
  - Add yearlong safe and efficient movement
  - Add common business yearlong needs – (logging trucks, farm implements, fuel trucks) spring weight limits are a problem for some businesses

- Objectives?
  - Making sure roads are adequate for scale of industry
  - (2006 Objective 3) Explore the opportunities for public transportation that meets the needs of a varied population including differently abled, elderly, families with small children...
  - (2006 Objective 3) issue with word explore...should use continue developing and improving public and specialized transportation services for all public including...
  - Add objective related to financing? → Support state and local road improvement funding at all levels of government
  - *Question:* look at transportation planning in a comprehensive way (multi-modal)? *Answer:* Agrees, Support Regional Transit Authority
- Action Items:
  - Problem isn't achievable to get enough money to take away 6 week freeze
  - Need to start raising taxes and fees...into conversation about issues of decreasing state funding
  - Encourage and increase economic development throughout the county to increase tax base to designate towards repairing roads
  - Identify freight routes for investment and grant opportunities → coordinate a collaboration
  - Siting industry based on transportation availability (maximize good roads, minimize stress) (comp plan should point out the need for more coordination with zoning department and highway department...is it a good idea to site a business in this location?)

Cultural and Natural Resources – Review Goals, Objectives, and Action Steps (moved to next meeting)

Other Business

Next Meeting Date and Location

- Need to identify criteria for farmland preservation plan → next two to three weeks
  - Wednesday, July 13 9AM

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Charlie, with a second by Donna. Motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 7:42pm.

Submitted by Natalie Cotter  
Assistant Planner, Ashland County