

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Agricultural Ad-Hoc Committee



Final Report
January 29, 2008



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

AGRICULTURE IN CHIPPEWA COUNTY.....2

AGRICULTURE’S ECONOMIC VALUE2

AGRICULTURAL AD-HOC COMMITTEE.....2

 COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION3

 COMMITTEE MEETINGS4

 COMMITTEE REDUCED IN SIZE.....4

METHODOLOGY4

 OCTOBER 17TH, 2006 – MEETING 15

 DECEMBER 5TH, 2006 - MEETING 2.....5

 JANUARY 16, 2007 – MEETING 35

 FEBRUARY 20, 2007 - MEETING 4.....5

 MARCH 20, 2007 - MEETING 5.....5

 JULY 17 & SEPTEMBER 18, 2007 - MEETINGS 6 & 75

 OCTOBER 16, 2007 - MEETING 8.....5

 JANUARY 15, 2008 - MEETING 95

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSIONS6

 COUNTY WIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM:.....6

 TAX INCENTIVES - SCORING SYSTEM BASED ON SUITABILITY OF SOIL BEING DEVELOPED6

 MITIGATION/IMPACT FEES FOR FARMLAND DEVELOPMENT.....6

 PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (PDR) OR TRANSFER OF DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS (TDR)6

 ZONING.....7

CONCLUSIONS7

 RECOMMENDATION # 1:.....7

 RECOMMENDATION # 2:.....7

 RECOMMENDATION # 3:.....8

 RECOMMENDATION # 4:.....8

 RECOMMENDATION # 5:.....8

ACCEPTANCE OF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS - FINAL VOTE8

Agriculture in Chippewa County

In 2002, Chippewa County ranked fifth (5th) in the state in number of dairy herds (564) and tenth (10th) in the number of cows (33,629). In addition, the county is in the top ten (10) for forage and hay production (272, 779 dry tons) as well as in the top twenty (20) for corn grain (8,619,523 bushels) and corn silage production (252,189 tons). These are based on the 2002 Agriculture Census. (NOTE: A new census with 2007 figures will be available within the next several months).

The agricultural community is an important force, which helps to drive and fuel the economic picture for Chippewa County's 60,000 plus residents. This sector of the economy includes hundreds of family-owned farms, related businesses and commercial operations that provide equipment, services and other products that the farming community needs to process, market and deliver food and fiber to the consumers.

Agriculture's Economic Value

The production, sales and processing of farm products generates employment, economic activity, income, and tax revenue for Chippewa County and its municipalities. How important is agriculture to the county's economy? Here are a few points of consideration:

- Agriculture provides jobs for over 3,700 Chippewa County residents, which is just over 12 percent of the total workforce. These jobs are diverse-farm owners, on-farm employees, veterinarians, crop and livestock consultants, feed and fuel suppliers, food processors, farm machinery manufacturers and dealers, barn builders and agricultural lenders, just to name a few.
- Accounts for \$382 million in economic activity per year and contributes \$103.7 million to the county's total income.
- 92.5% of the farms are owned by private individuals or families.

Although the county's agriculture is quite diversified, dairy is the most prominent and contributes \$211.2 million to the county's economy. The on-farm production and sale of milk accounts for \$97.2 million in economic activity. The processing of milk into dairy products accounts for another \$132.3 million. One dairy cow generates \$1,964 in direct income to producers and between \$15,000 to \$17,000 of economic activity for the county.

Agricultural Ad-Hoc Committee

On February 14th, 2006, the County Board approved and adopted a comprehensive revision of the county's zoning ordinance. This revision eliminated the Prime Agricultural (PA) zoning district because of the lack of interest in utilizing the district on lands located within the zoned towns. The decision left the ordinance with one agricultural district, which allowed a multitude of uses that could potentially cause more conflict by allowing non-compatible uses to coincide right next door to each other.

During the zoning committee public hearings and the county board approval process some valid points were expressed regarding the elimination of the prime agricultural district and only leaving one so called agricultural district. Some of the points are as follows:

- The comprehensive zoning ordinance does not have a true "Agricultural Zoning District", which limits development density and protects those individuals who are actively involved in agricultural activities;

- Because there has not been an “agricultural only zoning district” there is a growing population of the non-farming community living in the rural, agricultural areas of Chippewa County, which could potentially lead to a clash with the farming community;
- Expansion or construction of large livestock farms, including the ability to effectively manage animal waste in accordance with approved plans and regulations;
- Property rights vs. community rights and the ability to draft land use regulations that end at the property line and to protect the most productive soils
- Wisconsin right to farm language vs. nuisance complaints;
- Non-farming community vs. farming community and the ability for both to reside in the same area without conflict;
- The cost of land for development vs. agricultural production and the ability of a landowner to ultimately make the decision to keep the property in agricultural production without a financial loss or at least a loss from their own decision making process.

In response, the County Board adopted a resolution to establish an Ad-Hoc Committee to study development issues in the agricultural district of the zoning ordinance. The zoning committee, who authored the resolution, believed that it was in the best interest of Chippewa County to review potential solutions to protect farmland from the pressures of development and to minimize the conflict between the farming and the non-farming communities.

As part of the charge, the ad-hoc committee was directed to present its findings and recommendations in a full written report to the Agricultural and Extension Committee, the Economic and Industrial Committee, the Land Conservation Committee and the Zoning Committee.

Committee Representation

In April of 2006, a special committee comprised of the members from the Agricultural and Extension Committee, the Economic and Industrial Committee, the Land Conservation Committee and the Zoning Committees met to discuss a list of potential organizations/committees that would have representation on the ad-hoc committee. It was decided and approved that the following would be a great cross-section of the county and that the individual appointments would be left up to the organizations/towns.

It was anticipated that the appointed individual would offer an open and balanced perspective to the discussion and would keep their respective organizations informed of the ad-hoc committee’s proceedings. In addition, it was the hope of all the county committees involved that the above appointed individuals would provide the necessary recommendations that will not only protect the farmland, but also individual property rights.

Randy Knapp (UW-Extension Department), Dan Masterpole (Land Conservation Department) and Greg Gruna (Zoning Department) were all involved with the meetings as technical support. At a later time, Ryan Brown (Land Records Department/Zoning Department) was included in regards to his participation in the County’s Comprehensive Planning efforts.

The following table shows the members of the AAHC and the organization/committee/municipality they represented:

Organization/Committee/Municipality	Appointment By:	Appointed
County Agricultural/Extension Committee	Committee	Greg Hoffman
County Economic Development Committee	Committee	Larry Marquardt
County Land Conservation Committee	Committee	Pam Licht
County Zoning Committee	Committee	Lee McIlquham
Town of Anson	Town Board	David Woodford
Town of Eagle Point	Town Board	Jeff Bowe
Town of Hallie	Town Board	Ronald Steinmetz
Town of Lafayette	Town Board	David Hunt
Town of Wheaton	Town Board	Ken Custer
Town of Woodmohr	Town Board	Steve Hilger
Unzoned Towns (1 representing all)	Selection Committee	Eugene Lueck (WTA)
Realtor/Builder Association	Association(s)	Pat Kelly
Financial Institutions	Selection Committee	<i>No one showed an interest</i>
Farmer's Union	Union	George Polzin
NFO	Association	Steve Siverling
Farm Bureau	Bureau	Calvin Maier

Committee Meetings

The committee initially met on October 17th, 2006 to discuss the election of officers, future meeting dates and times, and the reasons for the creation committee. As part of the meeting, they were treated to an overview of agriculture in Wisconsin by Rod Nilsestuen who is the Secretary for the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

The committee decided to meet monthly after the 1st of the year. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a quorum in April, May, June, and August, the scheduled meetings could not be conducted. In response to the potential of having future conflicts with quorums, the original selection committee met on September 11, 2007, to discuss the possible removal of Ad-Hoc. Members.

Committee Reduced in Size

After a brief discussion, the committee decided to remove Steve Siverling (National Farmers Organization). The main reason for his removal was that he or his organization had not made any of the previous meetings, including those that were cancelled.

In addition, the committee also removed Ronald Steinmetz (Town of Hallie) at the advisement of Larry Marquardt (Hallie Town Chair). The reason for the removal of Ronald Steinmetz was that he had a conflict on the third Tuesday of each month with the Town of Hallie's Fire meetings. Since, Larry was already on the ag ad-hoc committee, he felt that he could represent both the county and the town's interest. The selection committee agreed to these changes, thus, the Ag Ad-hoc Committee was reduced to 13 members.

Methodology

Below is a timeline of the meetings the committee participated in and what was discussed at those meetings. The timeline of meetings will better give an idea of the methodology as to how the committee came up with their analysis.

October 17th, 2006 – Meeting 1

Rod Nilsestuen, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection Secretary, gave a great kick-off to the Agriculture Ad-Hoc Committee (AAHC) by discussing some major points from the Wisconsin Working Lands Initiative Report. An open discussion revolved around questions such as: *How and Why are we meeting? What is the end result? and What are we working towards?* In addition, the AAHC elected officers, discussed having a moderator to lead the committee, set future meeting dates, times and agendas.

December 5th, 2006 - Meeting 2

The AAHC met to finalize the committee charge and the meeting schedule. The AAHC reviewed Land Use Fact Sheets regarding Chippewa County and the surrounding counties. Jerry Clark, UW-Extension Crops and Soils Educator discussed the highlights of his working lands tour Spring trip.

January 16, 2007 – Meeting 3

The AAHC reviewed development trends and the farmland preservation status in Chippewa County. The committee also reviewed current agriculture districts from Chippewa County, Eau Claire County, Dunn County and Jefferson County.

February 20, 2007 - Meeting 4

The AAHC discussed the key question of “What are we trying to protect?” Discussion revolved around property rights, agricultural industry, environment and agricultural land. The committee reviewed several different Farmland Protection Models that utilized zoning and purchase of development rights (PDR).

March 20, 2007 - Meeting 5

The AAHC reviewed a project which showed all certified survey maps, plats, soils survey, etc. The committee also discussed and reviewed information pertaining to the Menomonie Working Lands Conference, the committee charge and meeting schedule progression. Also, the committee discussed some points of agreement and some focus questions.

July 17 & September 18, 2007 - Meetings 6 & 7

The AAHC continued the review, discussion and compilation of focus questions and points of agreement. Discussion centered on the Pros/Cons for a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)/Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) and a possible scoring system.

October 16, 2007 - Meeting 8

The AAHC analyzed the focus questions and the points of agreement and they reviewed the agricultural lands map and continued the discussion on TDR's/PDR's and potential scoring systems.

January 15, 2008 - Meeting 9

The AAHC met and finalized the report.

Analysis/Discussions

The Ag Ad-Hoc Committee (AAHC) discussed five (5) options for the protection of farmland throughout the scope of their meetings. The discussion helped in the decision for recommendations the AAHC made in the conclusions portion of this report. Listed below are the five options that were discussed and the pros/cons of each that the committee concluded.

County Wide Educational Program:

The AAHC discussed the idea of an education program to help protect farmland in the future by informing members of the public of the importance of farming.

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ An education program was the foundation to any program the committee is trying to put together○ Everyone in the group felt it was necessary○ Could potentially use existing county staff○ It can reach a large audience (adults, children, government officials, community leaders)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It's a long term solution, not urgent enough○ Who would implement the program?○ Who/how does the curriculum become developed

Tax Incentives - Scoring System based on Suitability of Soil being Developed

The AAHC discussed a potential tax break incentive based on a scoring system that would take into account the suitability of the soils for agriculture being developed. The tax breaks would be higher for those who build on less suitable agricultural soils (4-8 soils classification) compared to lower or possibly no tax breaks for development on suitable agricultural soils (1-3 soils classification).

The AAHC thought this may be a more palatable approach to the public rather than more restrictions. The thought being that a reward based system may be seen more favorably than additional restrictions. The committee never discussed pros and cons for a Scoring System.

Mitigation/Impact Fees for Farmland Development

The AAHC discussed the idea of mitigation/impact fees imposed/required for the development of land that was classified as prime farmland. After review by County staff, it was found that mitigation/impact fees were not allowed by the State Statutes. According to 66.0617, Wisconsin State Statutes, mitigation/impact fees are illegal for Counties to implement. As a result of this, the committee did not discuss this option further.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) or Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

The AAHC spent a majority of the meetings discussing the idea of PDR/TDR programs. They discussed how the development rights would be purchased from a landowner. Below are the pros and cons as discussed by the committee for a PDR/TDR program.

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ More of an incentive ○ Fair/voluntary ○ Spreads money out equally ○ Fair market value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Very expensive ○ Limited money source ○ One time deal, what about the next generation ○ Long run efficiency? ○ What about unzoned towns?

Zoning

The AAHC discussed the ability of zoning to limit farmland development. Below are the pros and cons the committee discussed regarding zoning as a restrictive tool.

<u>Pros</u>	<u>Cons</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Efficient ○ Can be flexible to guide development ○ Can be case specific ○ Can help with equal distribution of development rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temporary protection ○ Strong adherence and subject to change due to development pressure ○ Not voluntary ○ Tends to benefit those closest to town ○ Removes/restricts property rights without compensation ○ Could shift development to unzoned towns

Conclusions

The following recommendations, in no particular order, were finalized at the January 15, 2008, meeting.

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 any or all of 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. While we agreed that the current structure for development already included all these provisions, it is important to see if any unrelated costs are associated with developing land within a city or village, and if it is different from developing land within a town.

Recommendation # 5:

The County should allocate resources and technical review to the idea of a Voluntary Incentive Preservation (VIP) program. The VIP program would be set up for farm preservation with an appointed board oversight. The board chosen would be in charge of development and oversight of a voluntary farmland preservation program.

Acceptance of Report and Recommendations - Final Vote

At the final meeting (January 15, 2008) the committee made a motion to take an individual roll call vote to accept the report and amended recommendations as a whole. (NOTE: An “aye” vote represents agreement with the final report and its recommendations and a “nay” vote represents disagreement with the final report and its recommendations)

Committee Member	Aye	Nay	Not Present
Greg Hoffman	X		
Larry Marquardt	X		
Pam Licht	X		
Lee McIlquham	X		
Jeff Bowe	X		
Ken Custer	X		
Steve Hilger	X		
Eugene Lueck	X		
Pat Kelly	X		
Calvin Maier	X		
George Polzin			X
David Hunt			X
David Woodford			X