

**GREEN LAKE COUNTY  
FARMLAND PRESERVATION PLAN  
AD HOC STEERING COMMITTEE MINUTES  
Monday, July 28, 2014**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Al Shute called the meeting of the Farmland Preservation Plan Ad-Hoc Steering Committee to order at 7:04 p.m. in the Green Lake County Government Center, Training Room, Green Lake, WI. The requirements of the open meeting law were certified as being met.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Phil Anastasi, Kalton Bauman, Nav Ghimire, Jim Hebbe, Todd Morris (for Paul Gunderson), Al Shute, Rod Zietlow

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Bob Bahn, Allan Brooks, Mike Elder, Paul Gunderson, Ben Moderow, Damon Reabe, Harley Reabe

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Russ Beck (Town of St. Marie Supervisor), Carole DeCramer, Ken Jaworski, Jim Karlovich (Town of St. Marie Chairman), Green Lake County Corporation Counsel Diane Meulemans

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**AGENDA**

**On a motion by Hebbe/Anastasi, unanimously carried, the agenda was approved.**

**MINUTES**

**On a motion by Anastasi/Hebbe, the June 23<sup>rd</sup> minutes were approved.**

**CONTINUED GROUP DISCUSSION OF THE FOLLOWING WITH RESPECT TO THE FARMLAND PRESERVATION:**

- Goals, objectives, and policies in the current Farmland Preservation Plan.
- Actions to preserve farmland and promote agricultural development.

*(Notes attached)*

**FUTURE MEETING DATES**

December, 2014 or January, 2015, 7:00 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

**9:10 p.m. The meeting was adjourned with no objection.**

**RECORDED BY**

Carole DeCramer, Committee Secretary

**APPROVED**

March 3, 2015

## Meeting Notes

**Green Lake County Farmland Preservation Plan  
Ad-Hoc Steering Committee  
Monday, July 28, 2014, 7:00 PM  
County Government Center, 571 County Road A  
West Wing Training Room**

### **Additional Goals, Objectives and Policies based on Discussion Topics & Meeting Notes**

Below are the eight (8) discussion items the Ad-Hoc Committee discussed as part of the planning process. Feedback to those questions are listed as black text under a general heading below. **Red text** are goals and/or objectives derived from those statements. Please review the **red text** as appropriate goal and objective statements for the Farmland Preservation Plan. Be prepared to discuss them at the upcoming July 28 meeting.

1. Agricultural uses of land in the county including key agricultural specialties, if any.
2. Key agricultural resources, including available land, soil, and water resources facilities.
3. Significant trends in the county related to agricultural land use, agricultural production, enterprises related to agriculture, and the conversion of agricultural lands to other uses.
4. Anticipated changes in the nature, scope, location, and focus of agricultural production, processing, supply and distribution.
5. Development trends, plans, or needs that may affect farmland preservation and agricultural development in the county.
6. Key land use issues related to preserving farmland and promoting agricultural development, and plans for addressing those issues.
7. Forestry as component agriculture.
8. Accommodating future housing. Densities, preferred locations, compatibility.

### **Key Agricultural Resources**

Green Lake County has some of the best and most reliable farming soils in the State. These soils can grow a variety of crops.

The term “reliable soils” was further defined to mean a natural tolerance to weather extremes. The soils can tolerate period’s drought and wet conditions in given years still producing very acceptable yields.

In addition to area soils possessing a tolerance to weather extremes, area topography seems to further protect crops from extreme weather losses.

Field size has enlarged over the years improving cropping efficiencies and pest control success.

For these reasons, this trend will likely continue. Thus, a key resource becomes large, undisturbed tracts of farmland for agricultural production.

Build the Green Lake County Farmland Preservation Program on the concept that maintaining undisturbed tracts of farmland for agricultural production creates cropping efficiencies, improves pest control success and reduces land use conflicts with non-farm residences.

Maintain and promote programs, efforts and initiatives that lead to a diversified agricultural base as diversity leads to sustainability.

Recognize the most unique and productive soils occur in the SE corner of the Green Lake County in the original "Mackford Prairie" region, an area where the most intensive farmland preservation efforts should occur.

Support responsive, quality and environment friendly management techniques that further enhance soil productivity.

Urban/rural interface will continue.

Green Lake County is home to the largest Fresh Market Auction House in the State.

Green Lake Counties low rural population density appears to be an asset in attracting outside agricultural interest. This interest ranges from outside crop growers to Amish and/or Mennonite cultures.

Some people simply do not understand farming and how it works.

Regulation by non-farmers for farmers; that doesn't seem right.

Promote agricultural programs and educational efforts that are designed to create a stronger connection to the land and an understanding of agricultural systems, especially within younger generations and law makers.

Railroad infrastructure is in place to move agricultural product and increased investment in railroad is likely. The Fairwater to Markesan line was mentioned specifically. Improved highway systems may lead to barriers for farmers to access land.

Transportation (primarily highways) will impact future development patterns. If the highway systems stay the same (two-lane) on 23, 44, 73 & 49, development patterns will likely stay similar.

Expect large farm equipment to place pressure on support infrastructure, especially town and county roads. Will local budgets be able keep up and support agriculture to the extent required?

Increase efforts to secure larger allocations of local road aids and other agriculture infrastructure funding by the State to support and enhance the transportation of agricultural products.

Seek opportunities to work with the WDOT to improve county highway systems in a way that will not create barriers to the farmer's ability to adequately service their farmland.

Recognize the need to maintain and expand the county and regional agricultural infrastructure so that products can move efficiently and safely from producers to processors to buyers.

Green Lake itself (the water body) has a long history of water quality initiatives & programs designed to improve water quality. These programs may have been the catalyst for increased conservation practices elsewhere in the County.

Green Lake County has a high percentage of family owned farms devoted to agriculture. Family owned farms generate a strong “caretaker” attitude.

Green Lake County farmers and land owners have a history of acceptance to conservation efforts. Many engage in conservation practices without any program assistance.

Promote field trips, exhibitions and other outreach activities that exhibits the areas a strong conservation and land management ethic.

Green Lake County’s Land Conservation Department is very active and engaging with area land owners and is highly respected.

Maintain, and where required, expand the commitment to county departments, agencies and other agricultural partners in enhancing area agricultural programs, efforts and initiatives.

Wisconsin and the United States as a whole, contain an infrastructure advantage over other global countries and their producers in that the time to transport products is significantly quicker in connecting producers to buyers/users.

Land values will continue to increase due to the global demands for food both in volume and quality. Developing third world countries will play a big factor in increased food demand.

Recognize that Green Lake County agriculture is impacted by regional, national and global policies, markets and initiatives and, where appropriate, engage in local support to move agriculture in a positive direction.

### **Trends in Agricultural Land Use**

No till practices have increased throughout the County and due to its acceptance and success will likely continue and even increase in the future.

Good land management practices still need to focus on erosion loss along with the need to preserve farmland.

Over time crop production has increased, doing so while minimizing soil disturbance.

Best management practices (BMP’s), can overcome class ratings of soils. Expect to see more “marginal” lands being put into production. With this, expect to see the definition of “marginal” land change over time as BMP’s improve and barriers are overcome.

Recognize, support and enhance conservation and land management practices that minimize soil disturbance while increasing crop production.

High corn and protein cost were factors in seeing a reduction in mid-size dairy farms (defined currently as 150-300 cows). There was a loss of land base available to dairy farmer because of a shift of land into corn or soybean production, limiting dairies ability to grow or acquire needed feed at a cost effective price.

Grain farmers are not always local and will travel to rent property impacting the local dairy farmer’s ability to pay land rent cost or purchase land.

Understand that although the regional influence of agricultural players can improve the local ag economy, it can also create some stress within local types of farming which may cause transition. Attempts to balance agricultural interests should be acknowledged.

Technology changes will improve efficiencies. Increased efficiencies will likely lead to farm consolidation to take advantage of economies of scale.

Expect to see more innovation in computer software and hardware designs working together to assist in agriculture management.

Continue to support Green Lake County farmers in their willingness to engage in innovation.

Support the expansion of technology and innovation to improve cost efficiencies and “economies of scale” in agriculture.

Expect an influx of grain and cash crop operators renting land in the region. Crop farmers are not always local and will travel to rent property.

Future renters of agricultural land must abide by the same farmland preservation and conservation standards of farmland owners ensuring protection of the resource.

Require all farmers, whether owner or renter, to abide by the same farmland preservation and conservation standards ensuring resource protection.

Unfortunately the “battle” between farmers and non-farmers will likely continue over certain land use compatibility issues as the connection with the land becomes more distant with a majority of the populous.

Support a farmers “Right to Farm” when subjected to nuisance concerns expressed relative to traditional and customary farming practices.

Continued growth is likely in the organic market.

The Fresh Market in Green Lake County will need to target more urbanized locations so its growth can continue. There is a limited local population to support the Fresh Market. Growers must understand buyer demographics and improve the supply chain into new markets.

Maintain, support and enhance the opportunity for unique farm market niches like organics and specialty farming. Use these unique farming niches to further “brand” the areas rich agricultural traditions.

Target and expand opportunities to utilize locally grown and processed products in an effort to reduce transportation distances between producer and consumer.

The Green Lake County region has experienced an increase in agricultural service providers spawned by reliable agricultural production and farmer commitment in the Green Lake County area.

Continue to maintain a reliable county agricultural environment in order to maintain existing financial investment and spawn the expansion of agricultural related businesses.

The gap between the value of land for agriculture versus development has narrowed significantly. Consistently high gas prices along with a slow housing economy have reduced the

market for rural residential lots and subdivisions. The result is more land available for agricultural use and less farmer/non-farmer conflict.

Recognize that a strong and profitable local agricultural economy provides the best growth management program to reduce sprawl and incompatible land use situations in designated agricultural areas.

### **Key Land Use Issues and Trends Related to Preserving Farmland**

Some development will need to be accommodated in farmland preservation areas.

Housing generates more local tax dollars and must be accommodated as well.

Buyers of non-farm land that is housing or seasonal related, are geared to outdoor lifestyles, not necessarily farming.

In Green Lake County, the transformation of seasonal to permanent housing has had a positive impact on local tax revenue. Reinvestment in existing structures is occurring.

Recognize that rural Green Lake County must accommodate some residential development to maintain a local tax base. Utilize the farmland preservation planning process and local comprehensive planning efforts to direct non-farm related development into compatible and service oriented locations.

Land is that is coming out of the Conservation Reserve Program, is not being renewed due to the increased value agricultural land for crop production. Land is being put back into service.

The commitment to Ag Preservation Zoning can be an emotional decision when presented to the County. This has led to small and scattered rezones out of A-1 Agriculture which is not conducive to long term agriculture and its preservation. Decisions don't always follow farmland preservation protocol.

Adhere to the policies established within the Working Lands Initiative and the revised farmland preservation program to manage and or accommodate non-farm development within established farmland preservation areas.

### **Forestry as a Component of Agriculture**

Some reforestation and habitat work is occurring on good farmland due to land owner values.

Hardwood forestry is an important local economical resource. It creates spin-off job opportunities.

Forest proving recreational opportunities as well plus attribute to the county's rural character.

Unlike adjacent counties to the north and west, Green Lake County has good soils for hardwood production (cherry, walnut, maple and oak).

There appears to be a need for more private forest management consulting. Over harvest, especially hardwoods, maybe a growing issue.

Recognize forestry as an important component of the local agricultural economy and incorporate these forests as part of the farmland preservation planning areas.

Can sustainable forestry, reforestation and tree farms economically compete with grain crops on an acre by acre profit standpoint? Is it truly the highest and best economical use?

Forest management must prepare for the impact of invasive species. Emerald Ash Borer mentioned specifically.

Promote the utilization of forest management professionals to develop private forest management plans that will assist in maintaining this resource as a sustainable component of the local agriculture landscape.

### **Accommodating Future Housing (Densities, Preferred Locations, Compatibility)**

Non-farm residential development is a big barrier to progressive agriculture.

Low residential densities are more advantageous to farming. Keep ratio low. A one acre to 80 acre ratio of non-farm development to preserved farmland is not too bold.

Build the Green Lake County Farmland Preservation Program on the concept that maintaining undisturbed tracts of farmland for agricultural production creates cropping efficiencies, improves pest control success and reduces land use conflicts with non-farm residences.

Accommodating non-farm residential development in rural areas needs to be balanced. Residential development pays the bills. Locations need to be identified.

Government leaders should always look for residential clustering opportunities.

Towns should look toward "land use planning" as means to accommodate other uses.

There is a big difference in the non-farm development pattern north vs. south of Green Lake (Water Body).

Recognize that rural Green Lake County must accommodate some residential development to maintain a local tax base. Utilize the farmland preservation planning process and local comprehensive planning efforts to direct non-farm related development into compatible and service oriented locations.

Non-farm development (all types) should be directed to public systems (sewer & water) most of which are provided by cities and villages.

By making buyer amenities available and affordable in cities and villages, future non-farm development maybe attracted to those locations thereby improving land use compatibility.

Urban offered amenities must be affordable because there is a big cost difference between city/village vs. town land.

Crime, high city taxes and a perceived better quality life push development to rural areas.

Lenders are less willing to borrow \$\$ to young home buyers. Unsure what this will mean to future development patterns. It may make the rental market more active.

Recognize that Green Lake County Villages and Cities play an important role in preserving farmland as well by creating healthy, sustainable and affordable housing opportunities, markets for local products and hosting agricultural related business.

The new generation of farmers may meet financial barriers to expansion due to limited financing. As the cost of land, equipment and technology rise, new farmers will only be able to absorb a limited amount debt.

How to accommodate high capacity wells and windmills?

It takes a special person to want to live in a rural area (i.e. increased travel cost, less services, more inconveniences, etc.) all in exchange for a better quality of life.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Please note that black type has been reviewed by the Ag. Business AD-Hoc Committee and will be transferred from the original 1983 farmland preservation plan to the new farmland preservation plan. Red text includes changes to the 1983 farmland preservation plan wording. Blue text will be considered for transfer to the Green Lake County Comprehensive Plan as part of that update process.

~~The Introduction has illustrated the problem and the Plan Development has outlined the planning process.~~ This section ~~will identifies~~ the goals and objectives ~~of the Green Lake County Farmland Preservation Plan.~~ Goals represent common expressions of community ideas, objectives refine goals into more specific statements of what is to be accomplished, and implementation policy suggests alternatives to achieve these goals. These goals and objectives give direction to the plan ~~and provide a continuity of purpose among subsequent plan elements.~~

### OVERALL GOAL

IT IS A GOAL OF GREEN LAKE COUNTY TO MAINTAIN THE INTEGRITY AND VIABILITY OF COUNTY AGRICULTURE. THIS SHOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHOUT DAMAGING THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OR THE NATURAL RESOURCES WHICH PROVIDE A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE RESIDENTS OF THIS COUNTY.

### OBJECTIVES

To prepare in cooperation with applicable state agency(s), municipal, town, village, and other intra-governmental bodies a ~~twenty~~ ten year plan to sustain agriculture as an essential part of the economic and social structure of Green Lake County.

Implementation Policy:

1. Address and analyze the current status of County and town agriculture, characteristics of natural resources, current and projected population statistics, the need for urban growth and housing, and existing and projected public facilities.
2. Map farmland areas to be considered for preservation.
3. Support and compliment local, regional and state efforts to preserve farmland.
4. Provide a blueprint for action by stating the County's policy regarding the preservation of agricultural lands, ~~urban non-farm~~ growth, ~~private waste disposal systems,~~ and the protection of environmental and unique areas.
5. Prepare the plan in accordance with Chapter 91 of the Wisconsin Statutes ~~and ATCP 49 & 51.~~
6. Provide flexibility for change by establishing a systematic and continuous procedure to ascertain preferences and suggestions by citizens and to establish a procedure whereby additions, deletions, and other changes in the plan may be made as deemed necessary. ~~The procedure will involve a five year interval of review and revision with a maximum thirty month interval for updating data and/or elements of the plan.~~

### GOAL I

IT IS A GOAL OF GREEN LAKE COUNTY TO PRESERVE ITS FARMLAND BY PROTECTING THOSE LANDS FROM ENCROACHING INCOMPATIBLE LAND USES AND BY USING

## APPROPRIATE ~~SOIL MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES~~. BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.

### OBJECTIVES

To identify those lands most suitable for agricultural use.

~~To identify those agricultural lands most subject to soil erosion problems.~~

To preserve and enhance the ability ~~capability~~ of the land to provide agricultural products by ~~maintaining soil erosion losses within acceptable soil conservation limits.~~ the use of best management practices.

To provide continuous information to County Farmers pertaining to the financial advantages and long-range benefits of the farmland preservation program and ~~soil conservation planning.~~ the use of best management practices.

### Implementation Policy:

1. Establish criteria to maintain consistency in the identification of agricultural land and utilize those standards to delineate areas to be considered for preservation.
- ~~2. Develop standards to rank areas with critical soil erosion problems and prepare conservation plans for these areas on a priority basis.~~
3. Protect identified agricultural land through an integrated application of land use regulations, local planning, ~~farmland preservation contracts~~, agricultural enterprise areas (AEA's) and soil farm conservation plans.
4. Encourage the implementation of County agricultural land use regulations in towns with County zoning, and town agricultural land use regulations in towns that have not adopted County zoning.
- ~~5. Use existing building and sanitary codes; shoreland, subdivision, floodplain, and conservancy regulations; and County, regional, and town plans to augment farmland planning.~~
6. Minimize rural and urban land use conflicts by coordinating County and town land use planning and regulations.
7. Encourage development allowed in agricultural areas to minimize the amount of land removed from production and the impact the development will have on surrounding farm operations through land use planning and the use of applicable land use regulations.
8. Encourage all farmers to utilize applicable ~~soil conservation best management practices~~ in accordance with ATCP 50 to preserve the quality of their farmland.
9. Coordinate efforts of agencies involved with farmland preservation and soil and water conservation.
10. Provide information about cost sharing programs available to assist in the application of ~~conservation~~ best management practices.
11. Assist local governments who desire more involvement in agricultural land use planning.
12. Conduct informational meetings for agricultural organizations and the general public.

## GOAL II

IT IS A GOAL OF GREEN LAKE COUNTY TO ACCOMMODATE FUTURE ~~URBAN NON-FARM~~ AND RECREATIONAL GROWTH IN A MANNER WHICH WILL NOT STRAIN THE NATURAL OR FINANCIAL RESOURCES OF THE COUNTY OR ITS TOWNS ~~HIPS~~.

### OBJECTIVES

To encourage growth in areas where it will not conflict with other land uses and is compatible with local ~~environmental conditions~~ ~~comprehensive planning efforts~~.

To provide for growth by identifying those areas that are presently in agricultural use but which have characteristics which predicate future development.

To lend form to growth by anchoring development in areas that have existing, or are capable of providing public facilities and services in the future.

Implementation Policy:

1. Delineate areas capable of accommodating ~~non-farm~~ growth by using County and Town ~~maps-Comprehensive Plans. information on urban service areas and sanitary districts, the septic suitability of soils, and County and town land use plans.~~
2. Identify areas that are in a transition from agricultural uses to other nonfarm uses.
3. Minimize adverse environmental impact by encouraging development only in areas with soils suitable for septic tank absorption fields and subjecting proposed development to applicable land use regulations.
4. Encourage growth in suitable areas by assisting in the development of capital improvement programs designed to provide services in the most cost-effective manner.
5. Guide growth through the proper administration of County, city, and town codes, ordinances, regulations, and plans which identify public facilities and outline procedures for development.
6. Require Land Conservation Department review of all subdivision plans and supervision of the application of sediment and erosion control measures at construction sites and development areas.
7. Encourage a coordinated planning program among the County, Cities, and Towns.

## GOAL III

IT IS A GOAL OF GREEN LAKE COUNTY TO PRESERVE THOSE ENVIRONMENTAL AND UNIQUE AREAS WHICH ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR RESIDENTS OF THE COUNTY.

### OBJECTIVES

To protect the significant natural resources, open space, scenic, historical, and archaeological resources of the County.

To utilize these resources in such a manner that future generations can enjoy the amenities

provided by these areas.

Implementation Policy:

1. Protect sensitive environmental areas and provide recreational activities by following the program outlined in the Green Lake County, Outdoor Recreational Plan.
2. Provide information relating the importance of wetlands and woodlands to our quality of life.
3. Stimulate participation in the Big Green Lake Priority Watershed Plan.
4. Encourage soil conservation practices to reduce urban and rural nonpoint pollution.
5. Preserve small environmental areas located on farms by including these areas in farmland preservation contracts or exclusive agricultural zoning.
6. Minimize adverse environmental impact by encouraging development only in areas with soils suitable for septic tank absorption fields and subjecting development to applicable land use regulations.
7. Augment other local, regional, and state plans dealing with the preservation of environmental and unique areas.