

Wright County NWQ Natural Resources Committee Meeting #1
March, 5 2008

Attendees:

Committee Members: Dave Wagner, Mike McNellis, Mark Kampa, Rose Thelen, Shelly Jonas

Staff: Tom Salkowski, Stacy Marquardt, Scott Deckert

I. Introductions

Thelen is on the Clearwater Township Board and the Wright County Water Management Task Force. She was appointed to this committee. Her main concern is to preserve rural character and stem the forces of urban sprawl.

Kampa works for the Clearwater River Watershed District. He has concerns about storm water quality on lakes. The district has 158 miles of watershed and it was formed in 1975.

McNellis lives on Lake Sylvia. He has been a member of that association for 20 years. He would like to protect and preserve what we have right now.

Wagner lives in Corinna Township on Cedar Lake and is a member of the Cedar Lake Board. He moved here from the Twin Cities in 2003 and is concerned about the number of impaired waters in the County. He hopes we can find a happy medium between protecting lakes and letting people own and enjoy their property.

Jonas sits on the Annandale Planning Commission. She thinks we have a duty to protect our resources for future generations.

Olson is a resident on Lake Francis and has been with the lake association for 20 years. He is the DNR liaison for the lake and has been involved in water testing and is interested in keeping the lake clean. Right now it is marginal. He also belongs to the MN forestry association.

II. Ground Rules

Marquardt summarized some of the ground rules she wanted to adopt for this group and the purpose for adopting ground rules. The group agreed on the following ground rules:

- Only Committee members are allowed to comment during the meeting (Staff will stay after to answer questions or address comments).
- Committee Decisions are to be made in the meetings.
- Everyone participates; no one dominates.
- Listen carefully to others.
- One person talks at a time.
- It's okay to have friendly disagreements – everyone has a right to his/her own view.
- Cell phones silent during the meeting and answer the phone outside the room.
- Take your own breaks. There will be no group breaks.
- Commit to attending and being on time. If you can't, please contact the P & Z Office in advance.

III. Goals and Expectations of Committee

A. NEQ Plan and History

Salkowski summarized his thoughts on the committee and how updates will be given to the Planning Commission. Due to disruptions from audience participants during the NEQ plan, protocol regarding who was allowed to speak was established. Salkowski reviewed the role, makeup and format of the NEQ Task Force, noting that the Planning Commission was often left out of that process. The NEQ Task Force was set up to deal with many issues that may not have been of interest to everybody. The NWQ has 4 committees that will deal with more specific interests and this is one of them.

Thelen asked about the lack of a Clearwater Township and Clearwater City committee. Salkowski explained that Clearwater already has an Orderly Annexation Agreement (OAA), and that would preclude the need for a committee. Maple Lake and Annandale don't have similar agreements. Salkowski also stated that one of the biggest challenges in the NEQ plan was to come to an agreement between cities and townships. There has been a realization that city growth plans can't be ignored in county planning, and the County Board has made the decision to include cities in these plans and create "Transition Areas".

Salkowski also summarized aggregate policies in the context of the NEQ plan, state rules, and local aggregate supplies. There is a need to protect aggregate and to protect people and the environment from mining issues. Hopefully, the NWQ plan and process can clarify and resolve some of these issues. Also the “1 per 20” idea that was brought up in the NEQ was also summarized. It was mentioned in the plan, but put on hold for further discussion.

B. The Committee’s Role in the Process

Salkowski summarized the role of this Committee, and that is mainly to designate “Resource Lands”. There seems to be a very high regard in the County for lakes, natural resources, wooded areas and Wright County’s rural character. He summarized the 3 Resource Lands in the NEQ: The YMCA property, the area around Pelican Lake, and the area by the Crow River. Resource lands identify areas that are good candidates for purchase by public or preservation-minded groups. Wagner wanted clarification on what these Resource Lands would be used for. Would they be developed, public use or parks? Salkowski explained that they are areas worthy of protection and also areas that can be bought for preservation. However, he emphasized that it is usually a willing seller to a willing buyer. The federal government has made significant purchases of land around Pelican Lake since the NEQ plan was adopted. He included that there are often tax benefits for land donation or conservation. There aren’t any new restrictions on Resource Land. It remains 1 per 40 and wouldn’t be developed.

Guest speakers from various agencies will be utilized for this group, such as the DNR and Wright County Parks. The group will also spend time reviewing the goals and policies that were adopted for the NEQ and changing or adding to them as necessary. Salkowski said that this committee would be a sounding board and not a voting group. This group will be used to formulate recommendations that can be brought to the Planning Commission. If there are major disagreements, a majority and minority report can be drafted.

C. Planning versus Zoning

Salkowski explained that the group will be involved in both planning and zoning and explained the difference between the two. Planning issues would be addressed first and then zoning changes, if any, would be considered. Wagner asked if it was appropriate in a planning document to say that ordinance changes would be taken into consideration. Salkowski answered that there could be generalized policies in a plan that state the goal of the County is to pursue new ordinances. This often occurs in the implementation section of the plan.

IV. Review Information and Feedback from the Open Houses

Salkowski summarized the open house responses. Attendees filled out a survey and also could make comments on a map. Salkowski summarized the setup of the open house and how it was different than a traditional public hearing. He acknowledged that the survey was not a scientific survey, and mentioned that it still seemed to show that people in Wright County appreciate the rural character of the County. However, there are always people who will disagree. The survey is just one tool that was used to gauge opinion.

Thelen asked if this group would be coming up with the Resource Lands. Salkowski affirmed that comment and mentioned the group would also be discussing regulatory issues both within the plan and also in the context of potential ordinance amendments. Landowners may need to be contacted in regard to some of this. The Schmidt Lake area in the NEQ was summarized.

V. Next steps

Marquardt outlined what the committee would be addressing during future meetings. This included a review of the NEQ policies, mapping, and guest speakers from the DNR, County Parks and the SWCD. Wagner wondered if other counties would be a good resource. Thelen suggested the group, MN Waters. Salkowski thought an interesting topic was wildlife corridors and how to connect natural areas that are separated. Parks has looked into this, and it might be worthwhile to ask the DNR for their expertise.

There was discussion regarding the next meeting. The first Monday appeared to work with everyone’s schedule at 1:30.

