

Meeting Notes
(Approved 8 July 2019, no changes)

Town of Greenville
Land Stewardship/AEA Committee
Monday, 13 May 2019 (5:00 pm)
Greenville Town Hall

Present: Larry Bentle, Sally Bowers, Michael Brown, Joel Gregozeski, John Julius, Jean Julius, Mia Ljung, Tim Menning, Steve Nagy, Joe Ryan, Alison Volk (guest speaker).

Next Meeting: 8 July 2019 Monday (5:00 pm at the Town Hall)

"To do," items are indicated in red."

1. Call to order. 5:00 pm
2. Approval of 18 March 2019 meeting minutes. Draft minutes approved as written. (motion by Tim, Steve 2nd)
3. Land Trusts, (welcome Alison Volk, Easement Project Manager at Am. Farmland Trust)
 - a. **Attachment I** is a handout that Mia drafted entitled: "Update from Greenville's Greenbelt AEA: how to protect the Green in Greenville (DRAFT)". It gives a brief history of our Town, its efforts to plan area growth and the benefits of preserving green space in a community.
 - b. Over the past months Mia has been in touch with the Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust (NEWLT) organization to determine if they would be willing to start an Ag land trust program in this area. Recently their board decided to remain focused on preserving natural habitats and was not interested in Ag land trusts at this time and perhaps for the foreseeable future.
 - c. In Alison's presentation she said that American Farm Land Trust (AFT) is officially restarting a program to hold Agricultural easements as they did in the past. She is the Project Manager. For a several years their organization did not take applications, but have continued to hold and honor Ag easements already in their system from when the program was active. Alison and the AFT are interested in working with Greenville's Greenbelt and its AEA.
 - d. AFT is a national organization, not strictly local as with several land trust organizations across Wisconsin.
 - e. Alison is extremely interested in Greenville as she was instrumental in helping obtain State approval of our Greenville AEA when she worked for DATCP at the time of our Phase I and II AEA applications. 2014 & 2015 respectively. She would like to work with our Town to establish an Ag land trust program in our community.
 - i. AFT goals are to advance easement projects, especially where protection of agricultural land is not happening.

- f. Larry asked about the application process, funding for the application itself, funding needed to hold an approved trust, what does this do for us, and what does a landowner get if it is granted.
 - i. A landowner gives the development rights to his/her land to the trust organization (e.g. ATF). The subject land of landowners granted an easement is protected from development in perpetuity. AFT would hold the development rights and protects the land. Development of the lease is a negotiation between the landowner and AFT.
 - ii. Funds can be generated to pay a landowner the price value difference between development and Ag land. Support funds can be raised locally (e.g. tax levies, local & federal grants, etc.). This is referred to as a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program. Alternatively, a landowner could outright donate land into the trust/easement and take a tax write-off over a number of years for the donation value (subject to tax laws at the time).
 - iii. The landowner retains ownership of the land, can farm it, sell it, but it cannot be subdivided for residential or commercial development.
 - iv. Easement deeds do give some flexibility for use of the land, which is largely dependent upon how the easement is negotiated.
 - v. It depends on how Greenville would want to set it up to protect the land. That is, raise funds locally and have development rights purchased or some other type of protection program. Some landowners donate easements to AFT. AFT holds the donation and the farmer gets tax benefits.
 - vi. All landowners do not have to do the same thing, i.e. all easements are not identical.
- g. Larry asked: What does landowner do and what does the town do? Alison responded: It depends on how the program would be set up. Alison agreed to generate some example scenarios and send to us.
 - i. The town could hold easements and develop a PDR program on their own, but partnership is helpful. AFT is an active land trust. There is better protection of easements through the AFT than a local government entity.
 - ii. Landowner has negotiation rights – build a house, shed, etc. for the time they are still going to use the land themselves. Each negotiation is different.
 - iii. An attorney should look over the easement documents and a Financial Advisor should be involved to best protect the landowner and review benefits.
- h. John asked about revoking a land trust and if that would ever happen. He also brought up concerns about annual town meeting voters understanding how this is all working. Therefore, a Town committee or commission should be established to manage it– to avoid any mystery to it all. Alison responded: One should research what other communities have done, as this is very helpful. If you are raising funds, it is critical for the town residents to know where and how the funds are being used.

- i. John asked: What happened to the easements that were held some years ago by the AFT when the AFT decided to quit offering trusts?
 - i. Alison responded: In the 1980's AFT started holding easements. Held about 200. Then AFT started to shift their focus to building land trust capacity in other states and did not want to compete with local private trust organizations. It was felt that locals speak better regarding how to protect their land. The AFT's vision has now shifted to revamp the farmland preservation movement. Local farmland preservation efforts alone weren't able to do enough to protect farmland. AFT came in. In 2009 the PACE Program went through one round of funding then was not funded by the following WI administration. The PACE program itself is still in place. It remains a nonprofit organization, but with limited resources. Now the AFT has shifted back to offering to hold easements.
 - ii. The 1980 easements are still there in force. Stewardship of held easements are maintained through a representative who visits each participant every year.
 - iii. Northeast Wisconsin Land Trust will sometimes take on easements that support their vision, mission and goals.
- j. Michael asked: What if the Town says we don't think setting up a tax for this is the right choice or the voters do not support it? Are there sufficient grants and other funding out there to support it?
 - i. Grant \$\$\$ - Alison said that we (Greenville) currently show up as a prime location for funding – (like Madison). A key point brought up is that grants can be applied for and approved to fund a PDR program even if Town residents vote to reject a tax levy to fund the program.
 - ii. Can an individual landowner donate to AFT today? Yes. This can happen prior to the town developing their process for getting involved.
 - iii. The Town could set up a Restricted Special Revenue Fund to hold funds generated (e.g. via tax levy, grants, etc.). Alternatively, our committee or a similar group could establish a nonprofit entity to hold the funds and manage the funding on our own.
 - iv. Impact Fee Fund could also be established in which a fee is levied in other areas of the Town where development is to occur and the funds raised used to fund a PDR program.
- k. Establishment of a PDR program often starts through start-up projects and builds from there.
- l. Joe Ryan asked: What are the benefits to citizens?
 - i. John and Larry responded: Lower community taxes overall. For example, full residential services and related governmental costs are lower for rural and protected easement areas (see Attachment I, page 4). We are in the process of gathering data for Greenville in this regard.

ACTION STEP: Alison said she will provide various example scenarios of AFT easement holdings for us to review. Typically, AFT writes the

easements and gets steps in place. The town manages the enforcement of the easements. It is a partnership.

- 4 Committee account (Larry). Account balance: \$1068.
- 5 Town update (Michael)
 - a. Village incorporation. Working on responses greenbelt area – trying to show that agriculture is an industry – looking for information from the farmers how many employees, acres, sales, etc.
 - b. Comprehensive plan. Meeting Monday, ~~11:30~~. **May 20th at 4:30 pm** (correction by Michael on 5 June).
- 6 Community Ag education -HASD.
 - a. Ag tours for HS students (Larry, Sarah). No update.
 - b. School related activities (Sally)
 - i. Lydia Schiedermayer – HHS Senior – creating aeroponic gardens, taking produce to the Farmer’s Market
 - ii. Plants started, gardens will be planted soon
 - iii. Sally and Steve discussing what to do, if anything, with the two acres he is willing to share with Farm to School
- 7 Related area news & topics (All). None
- 8 Next meeting. **8 July 2019, 5:00 pm at the Town Hall**
- 9 Adjournment. 6:23 pm. Motion to adjourn by John, Tim 2nd.