

MEMORANDUM
WHITLEY COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION
WORKSHOP

September 15, 2021

Followed regular meeting (7:55 P.M.)

Whitley County Government Center
Lower Level, Meeting Room A/B

MEMBERS	PRESENT	ABSENT	STAFF
Michael Bemis	X		Nathan Bilger
Dane Drew	X		Brent Bockelman
Brent Emerick	X		
Theresa Green	X		LEGAL COUNSEL
Thor Hodges	X		Elizabeth Deckard (electronic)
Kim Kurtz-Seslar	X		
Joe Wolf	X		NONVOTING ADVISOR
Brad Wolfe	X		John Woodmansee
Doug Wright	X		

AUDIENCE MEMBERS

The audience attendance list was the same as the preceding regular meeting.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Hodges called the workshop to order at 7:55 p.m. Mr. Bilger read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

MINUTES OF AUGUST 25 WORKSHOP

Mr. Hodges asked for comments or a motion on the minutes of the August 25th workshop. Mr. Drew made a motion to accept the minutes as presented; Ms. Kurtz-Seslar seconded. Motion passed, 8-0-1, with Ms. Green abstaining due to being absent from that meeting.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WORKSHOP

Mr. Hodges opened the workshop. He stated that to respect the time, the workshop would be concluded at 9:15. He discussed the information that was provided from the commission members. He then turned over to Mr. Bilger to go over details of the information and comments.

Mr. Bilger presented a power point presentation as an overview of the information that was given as homework from the last meeting. He read and displayed comments from members' homework regarding the Plan and distributed printed versions to the commission members as reference.

Mr. Bilger presented comment 1: Discussing AG designation being broken down further (Cultivation only, General ag, and intense ag.), land districts should have both the current use and intended use of adjacent land in order to properly place districts, specific goals for Southeast Whitley County/Jefferson Twp. To encourage residential growth, and specific goals for the lake areas to protect the uniqueness of the area and set preferential setbacks.

Mr. Bilger then asked for thoughts and comments on this presented comment.

Mr. Bemis asked if there were comparisons and contrast with existing codes that could be reviewed along with these points. Mr. Bilger confirmed and stated that these would be later in the discussion.

Mr. Drew mentioned redistricting and wondered if it would affect any of the zoning. Discussion was made.

Mr. Bilger presented comment 2: Redefining AG/Rural into three designations.

1. Mixed rural→Mixed Rural/Residential→Hobby farms and residential development
2. Conventional Rural→Traditional Rural/Agriculture→crops, pastured livestock, hobby farms, and some residences
3. Traditional rural→Intense Rural or Intense Agriculture→ CFOs of all sizes.

Stated as a general comment that other uses for each of these would be permissible. Just a distinction for ag uses. Also, crossover between the plans as a 15 residence per square mile breakpoint. Adjacent areas examined for compatibility. Lake areas be given special consideration.

Mr. Bilger presented comment 3:

1. Character map should more closely reflect current land uses
2. Traditional and Conventional areas need to be combined.
3. Simplify map
 - a. Proposed map is too stringent—will stifle opportunities
 - b. Natural progression of change requires flexibility, and a simpler map allows that
 - c. County should not be designed by just a select few (Commission or consultants)
4. Proposed map panders to developers and activists
 - a. Does not reflect what families of WC desire
 - b. We do not want to look like Southwest Allen County
5. Agriculture needs to stop being singled out
 - a. Ag is diverse and ever changing. Therefore less restriction should be placed on it
 - b. Farms cannot choose their location like other uses.
 - c. Why are limits placed on agriculture in the character types/classifications?
 - d. There should be no mention of CFOs in the description or anywhere in the plan
 - e. CFOs are a zoning issue, not a planning issue
 - f. Map and descriptions show ignorance of types of farms. Small farms may be more noticeable than larger ones because of design and layout of barns and farm
6. The map should not create noncompliant land uses
 - a. Existing landowners should not have property made noncompliant with new maps.
 - b. Current residents lose with the proposed map. They want the right to do what they are doing.

7. Map changes too many things that do not need to be changed.
 - a. How much input was from the Task Forces vs. consultant-driven?
 - b. It strays into areas it has no business straying into.

Mr. Bilger presented comment 4:

1. Should there be an AG or CFO Control ordinance? Similar to the Subdivision Control Ordinance
 - a. We keep coming back to the same issue
 - b. 102.2-102.3 rewritten to apply to CFOs may have more public confidence.
2. What is the average lot size from the past 3 years? How many are minimum?
3. Identify current land uses
 - a. Commercial: village, General, Industrial
 - b. Residential: Rural residential, Suburban residential, Lake residential
 - c. Institutional
 - d. Ag: Concentrated ag, traditional ag
4. We need to identify the intensity of each current land classification
5. Define “prime farmland” if using that term, even if only WC.
6. Suggested table of uses/classification.

Discussion was made to reference on the 102.2-102.3 since it was not clear to what that referred. Character intensity (CI) notation from 1-5 from minimal (nature areas) to Urban. It was noted that “Prime farmland” was not a term used in the current plan. If it were to be used there would need to be some sort of definition assigned to “prime.”

Mr. Bilger presented table of uses with this comment. The table included suggested land classification, land uses, appropriate adjacent classifications, and structure and development features.

Mr. Bilger presented comment 5:

1. Retain the 2011 Map and Classifications
 - a. There are no questions. It is clear and understandable
 - b. It is not broken, no need to fix it.
 - c. However, add the 2017-10 Interim Overlay to the plan map, and include around the towns.
2. Biggest issue are land use conflicts in SE Jefferson and the Lakes
 - a. When interpretations of the map need to be map, use the 5 Goals and recommendations to encourage cooperation
 - b. The recommendations should be how to work toward the goals
3. Need verbiage to discourage come activities in certain areas. Discourage CAFOs in certain areas
 - a. Works with adding the interim Overlay area to the map.

Mr. Bilger presented Comment 6. This consisted of comparative maps from the Noble and Steuben Counties’ Comprehensive Plans, including differences in how future use areas were designated.

Mr. Bilger then turned over to Mr. Hodges who asked for discussion starting with breaking AG down. Mr. Bemis began by stating that it had been brought up before about a numbering system. Mr. Wolfe mentioned that breaking down AG further seemed to be a common statement.

Mr. Hodges brought up the comment of keeping what we have in place now as far as classification. Mr. Wolfe stated that we needed to go through and look at the classifications. Mr. Bemis stated that he is of the opinion of retaining the 2011 classification. Mr. Hodges discussed his input, the relevant points of the current plan. Discussion was made about the classification of the current plan and specific areas.

Mr. Wolfe discussed the table he had put together. Mr. Bilger compared the districts and the map and how they work together. Ms. Kurtz-Seslar discussed the classification of AG.

Mr. Bilger suggested as a starting point to take Mr. Wolfe's template as a guide and overlap the maps of 2011, and 2020, and see if there is consistency and look where the differences are. Mr. Wolf stated that 2020 map seemed to have too many rural classifications and should be case by case basis to allow for the latitude. The table was brought back up and discussed where proposed classification would fit into current classification. Residential, Lake Residential, general commercial, industrial, institutional, conservation open space. Mr. Wolfe asked for examples of the last district since they were not obvious on the map. Mr. Bilger listed nature preserves such as Dygert Woods and Pisgah Marsh, floodplains, among others.

Mr. Bilger discussed Ag and looking at the Map for Ag, Concentrated Ag, and Traditional Ag as suggested in Mr. Wolfe's template. Displaying the current map as a starting point and discussing what changes need to be made. If no changes were made, this would be the map. Mr. Bemis discussed the current map and clarification of definitions. Mr. Bilger clarified and asked for input on where Concentrated Ag should be, and which map is the closest to it. Mr. Wolfe stated that the Concentrated Ag should be in the orange area of the Map, around the existing CFOs. There was discussion, with the general conclusion that would be too restrictive.

Mr. Emerick stated that this is the first he has seen this, and he felt he could not discuss what suggested. Mr. Wolfe stated that it was what he had come up with for the homework that was asked. Mr. Bemis discussed the maps.

Ms. Kurtz-Seslar asked if a map could be created to show the concentration [density] of residences or population since the 15 dwellings per square mile used in the 2011 Plan may not be the right number to base classifications on. Mr. Bilger stated that he was not able to create such a density map for this meeting. Mr. Emerick stated that the 15 residents per square mile was not achievable or realistic and asked where that number came from and that it might need to be changed. Ms. Green stated that she agreed with Mr. Emerick that it would be limiting too much and would restrict growth. She stated that with these restrictions the County could be saying to someone thinking about coming here that "we don't want any more." Mr. Emerick agreed and stated that there were comments that were not addressed and discussed and that is unacceptable.

Mr. Bilger went back to the first 2 comments and discussed the map implications. Mr. Hodges discussed the map and expanding from the map that Mr. Wolfe presented. Discussion was made about where the CFOs should be located. Mr. Hodges suggested instead of figuring out where CFOs should be, it might be easier to work backwards and start with where the Commission did not want CFOs located. Mr. Drew noted that if you look at the 2020 Plan map and the 2017 Overlap map side by side, the two do rather line up. Mr. Bemis responded to Mr. Hodges' suggestion by stating that CFOs should not be located around lakes and towns. Ms. Green stated that she was not okay with restricting against any agriculture future use in the County. She felt the municipalities can already do that within their jurisdictional areas, and so, if someone did not want to live by a farm, then they need to live inside a city or a town. Mr. Wright agreed with Mr.

Bemis about a good starting point of where not to be located. Mr. Bemis showed concern with other classifications being ignored by focusing on the Ag classifications. Mr. Bilger suggested that if the areas on the maps coincide, start there, and adjust as we go through discussions. Still, there was further discussion about breaking down Ag again and into how many subcategories.

Coming to the agreed upon ending time of 9:15, Mr. Hodges stated that it was a good workshop and looked at calendars to verify the next meeting on the 20th of October. The workshop would again follow that meeting depending on the agenda. Mr. Bemis suggested to review the table as homework and look at land uses and classifications. Mr. Bilger would send out the table for all to review and modify to their preferred ideals. Contact information for members was discussed for conversation purposes. Mr. Bemis asked if anyone had any issues with other members having their contact information. All were okay with that and contact info will be shared.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further discussion, Mr. Hodges closed the workshop at 9:24 P.M.

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