

**Bridgewater Township
Comprehensive Plan Meeting
County of Rice, State of Minnesota
March 30, 2019
Official Minutes**

Call to order at 9:00 am

Roll Call: Gary Ebling, Glen Castore, John Holden, Jim and Carolyn Braun, John Klockeman, Ray Larson, Jeff Johnson, Larry Alderks, Frances Boehning

Guests: John McCarthy and 12 Bridgewater Township residents

- Introduction.
 - John Klockeman reviewed the purpose and history of the current comprehensive plan.
- Discussion regarding the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to **Agriculture**.
 - John Klockeman reviewed that topic and opened it up to questions and comments.
 - **Strengths**
 - Cash crop cash flow coming in (taxes, income)
 - Culture
 - Beauty of farms
 - Open spaces
 - Supports regional economy and jobs
 - Represents best use of land
 - Organic – biodiversity – healing soil
 - Growing industry
 - Speaks to environmental sustainability
 - CSA farms (5-20 acres)
 - Ties to family farms
 - Opportunity
 - Heritage farms
 - Increase fruit productions
 - Ag tourism
 - Livestock presence
 - **Weaknesses**
 - Open spaces are subject to wind erosion and wildlife habitat erosion.
 - Row crops are not bio-diverse
 - 26% of tax base tied to one type of economy
 - Peak-oil – Agriculture business is fossil fuel intensive
 - Expensive for young people to start farms
 - Prohibitive due to time, support, and money
 - Hard year for farm families
 - Unpredictable cash flow
 - Leads to farm families leaving.
 - While ag is having trouble now, the land will still be valuable in the future.
 - **Opportunities**
 - Diversity
 - Food production – diversify

- Good crop land provides flexibility
- Market expansion of broader crop production
 - Value added crops
- Increase diversification
 - Can help people stay on the farm
- Increase zoning
 - Feedlot limits
 - Functioning farms
- Promote organics and local produce
 - Supported by high quality of living in local cities
 - Need to promote balance/sustainability
- Bring back livestock in order to promote fertilizer production to help the land.
- Hydroponics
- Fish Farms
- Product locally
- **Threats**
 - Regulations
 - Unintended consequences (residential encroachment)
 - Low density housing.
 - CER and CPI indexes
 - Lack of fossil fuels
 - Urban creep/sprawl
 - Encroachment of neighboring cities.
 - World is changing fast – need to adapt
 - Climate Change
 - Hydroponic farms can out produce regular farms.
 - Economics – burn out factor driving some off the land.
 - Absentee landlords
 - Result in lower population
 - Abandoned farmsteads.
- Discussion regarding the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to **Residential**.
 - John Klockeman reviewed that topic and opened it up to questions and comments.
 - **Strengths**
 - Peace and quiet
 - Open space – view
 - Wildlife
 - Improve tax revenue
 - Use of less productive land
 - Grow your own food
 - Safe place
 - Good use of poor farm land
 - Maintains a sense of community
 - **Weaknesses**
 - Increase taxes
 - Cannot cluster houses
 - Large cluster makes it feel like a small city next to me – now I feel like I am not in the country
 - Clusters should be next to the cities

- We should be flexible enough to put clusters wherever it makes sense.
 - Question – How much of the Ag land is actually farmed?
 - **Opportunity**
 - Flexibility in zoning
 - Set receiving areas for housing development
 - Look at high density as a way to increase tax base
 - **Threats**
 - Loss of quality of life
 - Loss of population
 - Spreading high density residential in farming areas
 - Taxed the same as non-ag land as residential
 - In the future, some housing clusters and industry will want paved roads, water tower, and sewer.
- Discussion regarding the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats to **Commercial/Industrial/Highway Commercial.**
 - John Klockeman reviewed that topic and opened it up to questions and comments.
 - **Strengths**
 - Adds tax base
 - Adds jobs
 - Poor farm land – better use of marginal land
 - Transportation
 - Roads (pending interchange on Cty Rd 9)
 - Railroad
 - Chance to remediate superfund site in industrialized
 - Look at Commercial area along Baseline and Cty Rd 1.
 - **Weaknesses**
 - Water standards (pollution threat)
 - Light pollution
 - Cost of land remediation
 - Infrastructure cost (roads, sewer, water)
 - **Opportunity**
 - Create industrial site at Hoover dump
 - Hwy commercial – Baseline near Cty Rd 1.
 - Look at allowing something along major arteries.
 - Increase tax base but not population
 - Look at development along 19
 - **Threats**
 - Superfund site – cost of cleanup.
 - Loss of fossil fuels.

Adjourn

Chair	
Clerk	