

Heart of the City

April 10, 2006, Café Carpe

Present: Anders Yocom, Beth Gehred, Lue Ehinger, Mary Gates, Jill Kessenich, Steve Tesmer, Kitty Welch, Kathy Misfeldt, Greg Misfeldt, Kathy Kaufmann, Joan Callan, Paul Hable, Peter Jacobs

Meeting called to order at 7:06 pm by President Anders Yocom.

Last month's minutes approved.

Inspirational Moment: Lue Ehinger & Beth Gehred

Announcements:

Kathy K: Tuesday, April 18 Howard Zinn will be speaking at Hamilton center, Whitewater.

Kathy Misfeldt: Bike trail cleanup – Discussed possible date change to April 23? Looks like Saturday April 22 is better for more people. Kathy will send email out to sign people up.

Beth: Was not able to attend Land Use Conference. Sometime, May 10 – May 13 Mary Ringwold will be in the area, Beth wants to arrange an event.

Beth: Tuesday April 18 - Nova episode on the Dimming Sun

Beth: Working with a group to develop a sustainability plan for Whitewater campus.

Paul Hable: Thanks to everyone who contributed to school referendum victory.

Andy: Was with his daughter, recently installed geothermal heating in her new house.

Treasurers Report: Balance is approximately \$850

Speaker: Dr. Peter Jacobs – Tools for Farm Land and Open Space Preservation

Koshkonong planning commission, Drumlin Area Land Trust, Professor of Geology at Whitewater.

4.155 Million people reside within a 60 mi radius of Whitewater, with a total household income of \$110 Billion. We are losing 1.5 square miles of rural land per week

Reasons to preserve farm land:

- Consumes less \$ per tax dollar brought in
- Major contributor to economic health
- Tourism
- Productive farmland is non-renewable resource
- Possible future energy sources
- Environmental protection
- Wildlife habitat
- Part of our cultural heritage

Tools for Land Preservation:

- Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) – Deed is restricted, cannot be split up or built upon. Conservation Easement: legal agreement that can permanently restrict development and provide tax benefits. Made between landowner and a qualified organization (Land Trust) or govt. agency. The value of an easement is the difference between the land's value with and without right to develop. Federal matching funds are available for farmland. Owner gets benefit of tax deduction, can be a useful tool in estate planning.
- Farmland Development Rights Agreements – Land owners are granted income tax credits/exemptions in exchange for a contract agreeing to keep land in agriculture for 10–90 years. Not permanent, but it costs less to implement.
- Grassroots efforts at contacting legislators.

Washington County recently created a PDR program, plan to raise 800,000 per year via property taxes.

At the state-level, a "Working Lands Initiative" is currently under study. May work in conjunction with Land Legacy program.

Drumlin Area Land Trust (Formerly Jefferson County Land Trust). Private, run by volunteers with donations and grants, no paid staff, not part of County Government. Currently 6 easements (260 acres).

Beth: What if farm next to Jefferson Wal-Mart development got conservation easement? Would that inhibit sprawling development?

What would it take to get a County level land trust program? Need a charismatic leader.

Committee reports:

Projects:

Bark River appreciation day: June 3. Dick Wanie will lead a bird group in the morning. Speakers will talk about history of park. Hikes, Lunch. Could Sustainability superstore & other groups set up information tables?

Outreach/Education:

No report.

Public Policy/Govt :

Bill working on 501-C3, not in attendance.

Update on Mayors Climate protection agreement resolution effort. Targeting May 16 Council meeting to introduce resolution.

Ann Engleman attended a County Parks committee meeting. Provided a signup sheet to get people to attend City Council, Planning Commission, Jefferson County Parks committee meetings on a regular basis.

Potential future opportunity for assisting city in stormwater management education program.

New business:

Next Meeting

Monday, May 8; 7:00 pm - Café Carpe.

Steering Committee:

Sunday April 23 5:00, Ann & Andy's

Adjournment 8:30