

Appendix G

Portage County Planning and Zoning Committee

Public Hearing Minutes and
Motion on Resolution for Adoption
April 27, 2006

Portage County
Comprehensive Plan
2025

MINUTES
PORTAGE COUNTY PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE
April 27, 2006

Call to Order

Brazzale called the meeting of the Portage County Planning and Zoning Committee to order at 7:00 p.m. in Conference Rooms 1 and 2 of the Courthouse Annex.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Election of Planning and Zoning Committee Chair

Brazzale opened the nominations for Chairman. Brilowski nominated Olson for Chairman. Piesik seconded the nomination. Brazzale asked three times whether there were any other nominations. Potocki moved to cast a unanimous voice vote for Olson. Brilowski seconded the motion. A unanimous voice vote was cast for Olson to be Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Committee.

Election of Planning and Zoning Committee Vice-Chair

Olson opened nominations for Vice Chairman. Olson nominated Brilowski for Vice Chairman. Potocki seconded the nomination. Olson asked three times whether there were any other nominations and closed the nominations. Gifford moved to cast a unanimous voice vote for Brilowski. Potocki seconded the motion. A unanimous voice vote was cast for Brilowski to be Vice Chairman of the Planning and Zoning Committee.

Roll Call

Members present were Olson, Brilowski, Gifford, Piesik and Potocki. Staff present were Brazzale, Schuler, Wallace, and Dragolovich, Planning and Zoning Department.

Members of the public who wish to address the Committee on specific agenda items must register their request at this time, with such comments subject to the reasonable control of the Committee Chair as set forth in Robert's Rules of Order.

Marj Bachhuber, Town of Amherst Plan Commission Chairperson, registered to speak.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Portage County Comprehensive Plan 2025

Chairman Olson read the public hearing notice. Schuler gave some background information stating this process started in 2001 when steering committees were formed with representatives from each community in the County (Towns, Villages, City). The first 18 months of the project focused on public input. There was a County-wide survey mailed out. There were workshops held to identify major issues residents were concerned about across the County. There were a series of visioning sessions that culminated in the adoption of official visioning statements for the Rural and Urban portions of the County. For the next three years (2003-2006), planning staff worked with local communities to develop their comprehensive plans. Staff worked with 13 of the 17 townships, seven of the nine villages, and the City of Stevens Point. All the planning documents are similar and vary in sizes. All plans have the same nine chapters. There are two communities left who are moving toward having their public hearings soon. They should have their Plans adopted within the next month or so. Four of the towns and two of the villages decided not to participate in the project, and are working on their plans at their own pace. For the County Plan, staff used all the information from the town plans as the foundation. The Rural Steering Committee put the County Plan together. They met over 20 times, with each meeting being open to the public. They recommended the Plan to the Planning and Zoning Committee in March 2006. Between the end of March and tonight, there were two open houses. There was a 30-day notice of tonight's public hearing for the County Plan. Schuler asked for comments or questions.

Marj Bachhuber, Town of Amherst Plan Commission Chairperson, said the whole process at the Town level was enjoyable, with very little controversy. The staff were great, and Bachhuber was very pleased. She spent the last couple days looking through the Comprehensive Plan and often reads documents with an eye as to what is not in the document instead of what is in the document.

There are some things she wishes to comment on even though they will not be changed. Bachhuber read throughout the Plan and in various sections it says the County should be involved in development to protect the tax base (particularly in the Village of Plover and the City of Stevens Point). She noticed almost a de-emphasis on growing the tax base in the townships to protect the residential development that has occurred in the townships with the County's involvement, and that through the devaluation of farmland and so on, it is the residential areas in the townships that are picking up the cost of the taxes. Yet there is a de-emphasis in the Plan of anything to assist the townships. Bachhuber said she has a very different perspective; she was an official in a city that created a master plan, and now she is in a township, so she has seen this from both sides and understands that, but there needs to be as much a balance as possible.

There are incompatibilities and statements in various sections of the Plan between encouraging development especially around major urban areas and protecting the groundwater, lakes, and streams. The suffering of the Little Plover River, for example, has a lot to do with the excessive pumping that has occurred in the Village of Plover. If you read these statements about the need to continue to develop in order to increase the tax base, then you can only reach the conclusion that we are going to pump the groundwater and use it until there is none. A long time ago, Bachhuber went to a planning session with a planner from Racine, Wisconsin, and she will never forget what she learned. Before you take in a block of territory, ask about all the costs associated with development (fire, police protection, road maintenance, noise pollution, crime, water availability, sewer and water services). All this should be taken into consideration before encouraging more and more development. There is no guarantee that development will succeed. (i.e. the Crossroad development; it could succeed - it could fail). She is hoping that all those things were taken into consideration.

There are no statements in the Plan about transparency of development strategies, so that intergovernmental aspects of the Comprehensive Plan can get achieved. When the Town of Amherst did their Comprehensive Plan, the things that were preached to the Town from the County and State were to have intergovernmental cooperation all along the way. The Town tried to do that, and we were successful because of it. We were also told about openness, honesty, and protecting the farmland. We are doing everything we can to protect the farmland. So if you look at what has happened in the County in the last couple years, you find that there was not transparency in the development. Bachhuber is not seeing the need for transparency in the Plan. In 2003, John Holdridge, Town of Hull Chairman, wrote an open letter regarding smart growth. In the letter it says, "Finally, County planners have to be independent brokers, upholding high standards of planning to ensure that the public is well served. There is a question whether planners can be developers and still maintain their commitment and integrity of the planning process." Bachhuber does not see the difference between developing and being an honest set aside broker in the Plan. Not to say that planners are not honest, but when we talk about an honest broker, we are talking about the separation.

Bachhuber knows that Portage County has an Adult Entertainment Moratorium, but she did not see it mentioned in the Plan. Nor did she see any discouragement of this type of thing.

Bachhuber concluded that when we look at the future of the United States and the World, and the fact that the United States provides so much food for the rest of the World, part of smart growth nation-wide is protecting farmland not just for food, but for fuel as well (soy beans for ethanol). When you are talking about preserving farmland, there is the absence of incentives in the Plan. Not to be negative toward farmers, but when they are farming, they want to take advantage of every farm program that is available, and then they also want to turn their farms into residential lots for their retirement. What Bachhuber read in the Plan, is to keep the residential areas near the villages and urban areas, and develop areas that are not farmable. There is no incentive for the farmer to continue farming or to sell his land for farming. Farmers want tax breaks. We need to recapture what they have been given. Unless there is something in planning that gives incentives to keep farmland as farmland, we will run out of farmland. Not only Portage County, but the United States and the World will run out of farmland.

Gifford asked whether Bachhuber spoke to a Racine planner. Gifford went to college there and said it is easy enough for a Racine planner to say to watch for development. They have not expanded in almost 50 years because everybody is incorporated and landlocked. Post Racine, Gifford lived in California and what he does not want to see happen here, is what happened there. You can no longer buy a decent orange from California, because every grove in sight has gone for development. They used to have walnut orchards, and they all have been destroyed and burned down. Gifford does not know what is legally possible, but the notion if you are going to get tax breaks on your farmland, the municipalities should be able to recover some of that. Probably not from year one, but if you are going to sell your farmland, the municipality should ask for a differential for the last "x" amount of years (if that is even legal). At least that would be worth looking into. Nobody really knows exactly what happened with the Little Plover River. It may or may not be exclusively the Village of Plover, or some agricultural activities attributing to it. Rather than assessing blame at this time, it would be a good idea to study it.

Wally Wollering, resident of the Town of Lanark, said if a farmer has some land that he wants to use as his 401K, and the County wants to preserve that land for farmland, another farmer could not meet the price that a developer would offer. Is it possible there could be a subsidy to help the farmer purchase the farmland? Olson said if a subsidy comes from the County, the taxpayers will be paying for it. Wollering asked whether the County is interested in preserving farmland and willing to pay the extra amount? Olson mentioned the Land Preservation Committee. Gifford said he is a member of the Land Preservation Committee and the money in the Land Preservation fund would not buy a tenth of most people's farms. It only has \$100,000 in the fund per year. Land could cost \$30,000 per acre. As for the notion of the County subsidizing, Gifford is not sure everybody takes it seriously. There is not a lot of loose change lying around in the County that is not already committed to things. Gifford likes the idea of preserving farmland, but what does the County do that you do not want us to do anymore in order to subsidize land. It is a real dilemma right now.

Jim Missy, resident of the City of Stevens Point, said we have heard about the farmer who wants to sell his land for retirement, and the County can not preserve farmland, because there is not much money. You need to realize that if a subdivision is made, there are many expenses contingent upon that like roads and such. The money has to come from somewhere, and it is not as though it is free; this business about annexing. This has to do with the appropriation of money. It is probably less expensive in the long run for the farmer's farm to remain a farm, but the farmer does not get the money over the long run; that is the problem.

Kathy Dugan, resident of the City of Stevens Point, said she lived in Stevens Point for 30 years and values Portage County. She has been a supporter of the smart growth idea nation-wide. Dugan has watched the comprehensive planning process for five years and is one of the few "green people" who stayed with it and watched the process. It needed to be watch-dogged; it was not transparent. The press was not there. Dugan complimented Mark Hilliker of the University Extension office for coordinating meetings and arranging a survey, for which over 6,000 people returned responses. There were many sessions that Schuler mentioned and there was standing room only. That was the public, and we were given the vision, it was documented, and that vision said now this goes to the people who implement. The implementer got hold of it; not the Planning Department. There were wonderful planners on board for this (Hansen and Semmann), but the implementer's got involved and the rural and urban committees did not meet; the chairman of the joint committee did not meet. In the beginning, we thought we were well directed, and the citizens were speaking. Dugan attended many of the meetings, and one (unnamed) municipal official said he did not like the vision statements and thought the statements should be changed. The things they wanted to change were to have development near the City or that we should re-use our infrastructure and our buildings that are already vacant. Dugan then read a statement she had submitted to the Stevens Point Journal.

Gifford wondered what the total growth in population of Portage County was since 2000. Schuler said the County grew by 1,400 people since 2000 according to the State estimate. The Village of Plover grew by 831 people out of 1,482. Gifford said there is shuffling around within the area municipalities. When we do some of these commercial developments, the business moves from Main Street out to US Highway 10, for example. Gifford does not know what goes on at the Townships, but the Planning and Zoning Committee does not just sit around doing things arbitrarily; every rezoning has been with the approval of the Town Boards.

John Jazdzewski said he was on the Town of Carson Plan Commission and also was a member on the Rural Steering Committee. He was the Rural Steering Committee Chairman for five years. Jazdzewski thanked everyone for participating. The 6,000 plus surveys were returned to their communities, and they were well represented. When the Town of Carson did their Plan, the Town looked at each and every one of the comments listed on the survey. There were excellent planners that guided the Town of Carson with their Plan. The purpose of the Plan was for whoever comes into the municipality can find out what the hopes and intentions are for that community. The Town of Carson knew what they wanted in the Plan, but did not know how to say it. Mike Hansen or Tim Semmann (former planners) would type the text and at the next meeting we would go over it and change it appropriately. We can not lose sight that it is a Plan. It can be changed at any time we decide it needs changing by going through the proper procedures to do it. It does not specifically spell out ways to do each of those things. What it does spell out is what we would like to see done. We tried to put in language pertaining to working together. When implementing things the Plan stipulates, they will be developed according to the Plan criteria for each individual township at the local level, and the County as a whole. Some items will be ongoing (ambulance service and law enforcement). There were new classifications of zoning that were requested. We are in no position to say we are going to get them, but they were requested. As the Plan is implemented, the Planning and Zoning Committee and Department will look at the Plan and say these are things that these municipalities spelled out they needed. Now let's work on implementing and developing them. The text does not have the answer; it is actually a wish list. It is easy to pick a Plan apart or say something is missing, but it is there. Jazdzewski considers this whole County rural. It is not like a big city; you walk in here and you know people. Let's not lose sight of the fact that this is a comprehensive plan. It was well worked on by the Steering Committees and planning staff. This was by no means haphazardously put together. The Plan tells us how to amend it. No one has gone off on their own, totally. To be a good planner, or a good mayor, or even a good town chairman, you have to have a dream and you have to pursue it, but you have to be respectful of all the people who put you there, and we have this with this community.

Don Rusch, Town of Sharon, appreciates the discussion today. The energy in the Town of Sharon was lively, and the people worked hard. There was a lot of input and involvement. The Plan was submitted and approved by the local people. The Town had a change of leadership and the new Town Board decided they did not like that Plan because it was not their particular interest. The Town of Sharon Board is in the process of getting a new Town Plan in which the public has been shut out. The public hearing for the Plan is just a formality because the Plan will not likely be re-touched. Rusch is concerned about agriculture preservation, wildlife habitats, and environmentally sensitive areas. We have to be progressive, but certainly have to be wise and good stewards of the land. A great number of citizens in the Town of Sharon are concerned about the watershed for the City of Stevens Point. About 60 percent of the water that comes into the City comes through a part of the Town of Sharon. A select amount of people want to populate this area. That would hurt the groundwater quality. As County planners, you have to take note of things like that. Rusch does not mind people cashing in their 401K plans in the form of land, but do it wisely. Rusch feels very uncomfortable making decisions that will affect people three and four generations from now. Chances we take with our environment take a very long time to correct. Rusch is frustrated because the Town had a good Plan before the new Town Board was elected. The Town citizens want to be heard.

Jazdzewski said, at the open houses, some representatives that were on the Town of Sharon's Plan Commission were back there again asking how do we get back where we were. Their voices are being heard. The County's position on municipalities that currently do not have a comprehensive plan is to use the old Town Plan.

Dugan said her statement had to do with the whole County. It is clear that a number of us in the City of Stevens Point, if given the opportunity to see the City's Plan, would not agree with it. Not many people understand what has happened to the City's Plan. All people working on the Plan were appointed to work on it.

Potocki asked whether there was a public hearing for the City Plan and how many people attended. Dugan said she doubted that many showed up. Jazdzewski said he attended the open house and there were about 15 people there. The only City representative was John Gardner, Director of Planning/Community Development. There were some alderman there and Schuler and Wallace of the Planning and Zoning Department. This was publicized. Jazdzewski lives in a rural area in the County, and he heard about. The Plan was available in the City Clerk's office, if anyone wanted to look at it.

Dugan said the press needed to be there to tell people what was going on. The press did not do that. Olson said he appreciates concerns and questions about the City Plan, but please keep the comments regarding the County Plan.

Sherry Zei, Town of Almond, asked whether the County Board would accept the Town of Sharon's Plan, if it does not represent the people who live there; or the City's Plan for that matter. Schuler said the first question would be whether it was passed properly by the Town Board. State law basically says that the Plan Commission drafts it, recommends it, and the Town Board has the final say on it. He is not sure if the County is able to not process it. What we have done in the past is just point out inconsistencies. The County can not tell the Towns what to put in their Plans.

Gifford said he chaired an academic department at UW-Stevens Point, which is a difficult task. But when Chairman Idsvoog asked Gifford to be on the Planning and Zoning Committee two years ago, Gifford almost said no because being involved in planning may be one of the most frustrating things in the world. There are two positions, which are almost irreconcilable. One is that the landowners should be looking for the good in land; we are stewards of the land. The second is the person that says no, I own the property and I can do whatever I want with it. Gifford does not see a compromise with that. You can not make both groups happy.

Jerry Walters, Village of Whiting President, gave kudos to the County staff regarding the work they did with the communities. As far as protecting our groundwater, there are ordinances that do that. It is really up to the villages and towns to strengthen their ordinances. The Journal makes it look apparent why the Little Plover is depleting, but that has not been proven to the people at the University of Wisconsin. Growth in the villages and towns is the only way we can get tax levy. As far as the City gobbling everybody up, the Village of Whiting is right in the middle of the City of Stevens Point and Village of Plover, but we have no concerns about that because we are incorporated.

Elbert Rackow, who lives in the City of Stevens Point, said financial planners and advisors are always telling us to assure ourselves a respectable retirement and put money away early. If we do not plan, we are likely to fall short of a respectable retirement. There are definite parallels between this advice and planning by governmental units. Every time a developer goes to a governmental unit with plans for a project, the governmental unit has to evaluate it in isolation. If it has to do this in isolation, the governmental unit spends a lot of time evaluating it and preparing a response. This is costing staff time and is frustrating for a developer. Also it tends to tempt the developer to try to play one governmental unit off the neighboring one.

As Rackow sees it, comprehensive planning makes it much easier for a developer to determine where the development might fit. The completed comprehensive plan should make it easier for the governmental unit to evaluate the proposal and make a final approval, because comprehensive plans adjoining governmental units have been compared and coordinated at the edge of each unit; then the potential to play governmental units against each other is greatly reduced. The planners did a good job with the comprehensive plan.

Joan Scheider asked whether the new corrections made by the new Town Board have to come back to a public hearing? Olson said it probably would.

Rick Simmons, Town of Belmont Plan Commission Chairman, said the Town of Belmont has come a long way in terms of zoning and getting a Plan with the assistance of the Planning and Zoning Department. He extended the Town's appreciation for the Department's help. The Town of Belmont Comprehensive Plan holds together well, but tonight's comments make him think more of the Plan.

Olson said it has been an extensive Plan. Since 2001, there were a few somewhat frustrating evening meetings at which the Rural/Urban Steering Committee did not really accomplish much, but at the same time Olson can not imagine a better Committee that Jazdzewski put together with all the representatives throughout the County. It was a great learning experience.

Messing said he wondered whether there was a different way of looking at it. Are there some important similarities that would unite the farmer that has hundred of acres that wants to sell the farm, and the city dweller who does not want him to do it because he does not want any more growth in the countryside. Are there some underlying common interests that would unite these various people to come up with solutions?

Bachhuber said she was pleased with the planning process and the Planning and Zoning Department's dedication on the project. She thinks we have worked through the similarities and differences in the Plan. It is very difficult to satisfy all the interests. A blueprint has been laid out to make it easier for developers to see where development could go. Let us all be mindful of the speed and scope of development.

Greg Wysocki, former Chairman, Town of Sharon Plan Commission, asked whether comments will be closed at today's meeting or will there be an extended period where comments can be submitted. Olson said this is the public hearing for the County Comprehensive Plan and a decision will be made today. The next step is submitting the Plan to the County Board.

Schuler said a lot of people have worked on the Plan and commended former planners Mike Hansen, Tim Semmann, Jason Kakatsch, Shawn Wesener, and Dan Bowers, who were the group that started the project, with Kathy Foelker and Sarah Wallace. Schuler said he appreciates the local government's as well as the Committee's patience as staff and situations changed over time. The Town Plans and County Plan are very flexible documents and intended to be changed when needed. Schuler suggested the Committee make two small revisions to the Plan as follows:

1. Correct the title of Map 8.3 (page 230) to "Generalized Future Land Use 2025", and add a note to the map that complete future land use information is available on the individual adopted Town Future Land Use Maps.
2. Revise Section 9.3(B)(1) as follows: ~~**Any County resident may request that the Planning and Zoning Committee review land use for a parcel of land not owned by the resident making the request.~~ The Planning and Zoning Committee must ~~then~~ determine if the request is in the County's best interest; if so, the Planning and Zoning Committee would move forward with the request; if not, then the Planning and Zoning Committee would deny it. **Any requested changes to future land use designations must be processed and acted upon by the specific Town Plan Commission and Board prior to submittal to Portage County.**

Olson read a letter by Richard and Mary Filtz regarding the zoning of their land in the Town of Stockton. Brazzale said this is really a Town issue. Schuler said Filtz felt very strongly about having his voice heard, so we made sure he was able to submit his letter, but his issue is strictly with the Town of Stockton.

There being no further questions or testimony, Olson closed the public hearing.

BUSINESS MEETING:

Review/Approval of March 23, 2006 Minutes

Gifford moved to approve the minutes as presented. Potocki seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Correspondence

None.

Review/Approval - Vouchers

Brilowski moved to approve voucher approval number 20060236. Piesik seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Decision on Portage County Comprehensive Plan 2025

Gifford moved to adopt the Plan. Potocki seconded the motion. Gifford wanted to discuss the amendments to the Plan and moved to approve amendment number one; the title of Map 8.3. Potocki seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Gifford moved for clarification of the second amendment. Brilowski seconded the motion. Gifford asked why the amendment was even in there, and wondered whether people could make a request that their neighbor's property be rezoned. Schuler said the amendment talks about the land use, not the zoning. We tried to be as broad as possible; this is more tailored toward an individual municipality.

Jazdzewski said this is a request for land use designation. In each township when they went through their land use map, there was a chart designating different land uses. People were asked what zoning classifications would they see in certain land use categories. If you see a landowner doing something that you think does not comply with what the zoning is, you can request to the township or municipality a more specific land use designation.

Schuler said what we are trying to do is eliminate any focus on future land use by striking the first sentence; it would redirect the focus to policy issues. The Planning and Zoning Department would make a recommendation to the Committee. The Committee would vote on whether the idea has merit or not and whether it should be pursued. That was set up to give people the opportunity to have input on policy issues. The last sentence talks about a land use map amendment, which would be a request that needs to go through the Township. This was a fix; not necessarily the fix. Schuler is open to suggestions.

Potocki said if the Committee will not do anything with it, why does it not go right to the Town first. Schuler said action on land use will be at the Town level, but there are policies in this County Plan that do not need to go through the Town. Piesik said if a request is generally pertaining to the Plan, people can come to the County, but if it is a Town Land Use Plan/Map they need to go through the Town first. Schuler said yes.

Olson asked for a vote on the motion for amendment number two made by Gifford and seconded by Brilowski. Motion carried.

Olson said there is a motion and a second to approve the Portage County Comprehensive Plan 2025. Gifford referred the Committee to page 231 and said there is low density residential and there is medium residential, where is the high residential? Two or four acres are for low density and if there are two to four acres you probably will not notice a lot of difference driving around. Why don't we have something that deals with high density, or is it the assumption that those will only occur in the incorporated areas. Olson said high density would have sewer and water services; that is one of the requirements. Brazzale said the Zoning Ordinance refers to the high density development in areas that are served by sewer and water or within the sewer service areas with the intent of having sewer and water within a year or two.

Gifford said this Plan allows something with .10 acres per residence still being classified by us as medium density. Schuler said all this says is how the land can be used in the different categories. The actual zoning regulations are a whole different situation.

Gifford asked about the Filtz letter regarding their land in the Town of Stockton. This is the one thing that Gifford hopes this Committee and the various Towns that participated in the Plan would try to avoid, which is we have a Plan, it is a principle, and let's not keep allowing exceptions. We want to look at whether it fits the spirit. The principles are good as long as we do not keep modifying them on a piece-by-piece basis. If we think an area is really moving into residential, lets modify the Plan rather than change each parcel one at a time.

Potocki referred the Committee to page 55 of the Plan and said being a retired Sheriff, he can say what is in this Plan is a nice wish list for the Sheriff's Department but does not happen. Right now the Sheriff's Department has six districts, and depending on how many officers are working, there are only one or two officers working on the day shift the majority of the time. The rest of the officers are on calls, transferring prisoners or mental patients, etc. The Plan says, on a night shift, there are two officers assigned to each district, plus two floaters. That is a total of eight officers. Potocki said that does not happen. The officers are being used for different things and are not out there protecting the people. Olson asked where the information in the Plan was obtained. Schuler said it came from the Sheriff's Department, and asked what the best way was to modify it now that we have different information. Potocki said what is in the Plan is ideal, but it does not happen that way.

Gifford said the Plan says Portage County is divided into three districts. Potocki said Portage County is divided into six districts. We need the correct information. Potocki said there are six areas, one through six. Areas one and two are one district, areas three and four are the second district, and areas five and six is the third district. Ideally, if you had one officer for each district, you would have good coverage.

Gifford said the Plan says officers are assigned. It does not say they are actually there.

Olson asked what would be the procedure to put the correct information in the Plan regarding the Sheriff's Department.

Gifford said much of the information in Chapter 4 is a description of what we perceive to exist at this point in time. For example, what happens if next week the Portage County Board decides the Land Preservation Committee ceases to exist? This document will say the County still has a Land Preservation Committee. There is information giving facts and statistics. There is a difference between information and policies; they seemed to be mixed up here. What happens if the Sheriff's Department changes their policy? The Plan will no longer reflect reality.

Jazdzewski said that is exactly what the Rural Steering Committee asked the planners. Basically, the day it was passed is the day it was in effect. This Plan is for us to use, but if someone wants to open a business somewhere this is a basic outline of what Portage County is. For all intents and purposes, when it comes to budgetary planning, you take what it costs to put those positions out there. You know you might not get all of them and might have to bend over backwards to make it work.

Gifford asked whether this is a plan or a description. Schuler said it is both. You have the data and analysis portion and the policy portion. The background information has value because it provides a snapshot in time about the County.

Gifford said it might be useful to say that this is not a plan or policy, but a description of the state of affairs on April 27, 2006. In five years, Portage County might have twice as many officers or half as many officers, but someone will look at the Plan and say Portage County has 44 deputies, I am going to move my business there. The problem is whether the County Board moves to cut the number of deputies we hire. In affect, if this is the Plan, we are amending the Plan and yet the Portage County Board can not do that. We need to distinguish between description and mandate. Schuler said generally any document will have some background information and not assumed to be held accountable for and have to maintain this level. Gifford suggested adding a statement at the beginning of the document stating this is background information that describes the circumstances in Portage County at the time this Plan was adopted.

Wollering said if officer coverage has to be changed, it should be in the implementation section of the Plan, just like ambulance. Schuler said it is located in the implementation section and referred the Committee to the issues and conclusions on page 71. It states to monitor police coverage and adjust accordingly.

Piesik asked how to change it, if there is a problem with it. Schuler said you can make any change you want, and we will make sure the County Board gets the amended copy. Gifford said if this is a Plan, there should be a process to amend it. We would have to go through that just to make an amendment. Schuler said that is true, which would open things up for discussion and let people have a say of what should and should not be in the Plan. Jazdzewski said not every comma and semi-colon that gets changed needs a public hearing. You could have a yearly (or however often you want to) update where there is interest to provide accurate information. This is something you can do, but the information in the Plan is information developed for the Plan.

Richard Kajander said maybe a few of these things are objectives and you do not always make your objective. Gifford said apparently these are supposedly statements of fact and wants to make a distinction between what is a Plan as opposed to what is happening now. Maybe an amendment could be put in the Plan saying the Planning Committee can make adjustments to factual matters in the document as the need arises. Then we would not have to go through the amendment process just to say we now have 46 officers, for example.

Bachhuber said there are different parts of the Plan; some are descriptive, some are objectives, and some are policies and goals. This part is descriptive, however, this not the accurate description of the police department. She was under the assumption there were more officers on duty than what Potocki said. Yes, this is a snapshot in time, but make it the reality. Then we can deal with it, and you can update it yearly. If there are 20 officers, you say there are 20 officers. Right now it is not accurate. Schuler said in theory, for example, we have requested from the Sheriff's Department a description of the service. We have received it and now we received an anecdotal comment that may not be the case. Now the anecdotal description is perceived as factual, because we need to get reality in here, and if they would have staffed the positions perhaps the patrol cycle would have been achieved. Bachhuber said all she was suggesting was the rewriting of the language. It is not necessarily factual that one officer is assigned to each district, plus additional officers throughout the County and during the night shift. The current language gives the impression this is exactly what is happening. Schuler asked whether Potocki could work with the Sheriff to draft some language to iron out that section before it goes to the County Board.

Jazdzewski said we are beating on the wrong bush; fives years was a long time. These were numbers provided by local law enforcement. Piesik said we are complaining about inventory. We are basically talking about sections that will change over time anyway.

Joan Scheider said this is just a snapshot in time with projections for the future. We will be seeing changes in many of the sections.

Olson said rather than changing the information, Olson agrees with Gifford that there could be a statement made pertaining to the time the information was gathered.

Nathan Wolosek, representing the Town of Grant, said yes this is a snapshot in time and even if it is updated, it will have to be updated again and again. Chapters 1 through 7 are pretty much background information. If wording is going to be added, it should go up front in the introduction. Wolosek does not feel the wording is necessary because it is our responsibility as members of the Rural Steering Committee to adopt that. If you read the implementation chapter, that is one of the things that is required. An issue we have to be careful of is that State Statutes specifically say how any changes to the Plan are to be made. It is real good to say this Committee could make changes, but State Statutes say it has to go through a process to make changes.

Olson referred the Committee to the Introduction. It states what we have been discussing. Schuler read the Introduction statement of the Plan, which refers to the Plan as being a practical guide.

Olson said there is a motion on the floor by Gifford and a second by Potocki to approve the Portage County Comprehensive Plan 2025. Motion carried.

Department Report

Brazzale stated the Portage County Private Sewer Ordinance is being updated and will be presented before the Committee in the near future.

Next Meeting Date / Set Monthly Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be Monday, May 1, 2006, in Conference Room 5 of the Courthouse Annex.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Committee, Gifford moved to adjourn. Olson seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Harvey Olson, Chairman

Susan Dragolovich,
Recording Secretary

Date