



Agriculture Preservation Committee Meeting

Thursday, May 12th, 2022

7:00 PM

**Note: This meeting will be held in-person in the
City Hall Council Chambers at 3033 St. Croix Trail
Afton, MN 55001**

Agenda

- 1. Call to Order - Chair Marjorie Wade**
- 2. Minutes of April 3, 2022 meeting**
- 3. Roll Call**
 - Chris Bliska**
 - Cody Kaye**
 - Michael Morehead**
 - Kevin Murphy**
 - Doug Parker**
 - Nicole Roettger**
 - Nancy Turner**
 - Marjorie Wade**
 - Karen Weiss**
 - Joel Wipperfurth**
- 4. Update regarding the Committee's Report and Recommendations**
- 5. Schedule next meeting**
- 6. Determine Chair for next meeting**
- 7. Adjournment**

Meeting started at 7:00

Members in attendance...

Chris Bliska
Cody Kaye
Michael Morehead
Kevin Murphy
Doug Parker
Nancy Turner
Marjorie Wade
Joel Weiss

Also, listening in on this meeting was Mayor Bill Palmquist.

Joel went over the Afton Ag Land Preservation report (v 1.5).

This report was emailed from Ron to committee Friday March 4th. This version has working links for resources on last page.

Introduction:

Roadmap:

Options:

Evaluation:

- A question was raised about verbiage and wording or interchange of Agricultural land and Farm land.
- Another about using large parcels or large scale when referencing Ag Preservation (should this refer to any size, or be defined).
- There were questions of other wording or definitions.

The thought was making relatively minor changes to the document now would require meeting again to approve any changes. And since the committee was formed to make initial recommendations, we do not need to define in more detail now.

The question was raised about this document and whether it is ready to be sent to the Council as it is written today, to get their reaction or direction from it. And/or what their commitment going forward would be to it.

Consensus from committee was that it is ok as an initial draft. And that it could be submitted to them.

The goal for Council is to determine what has the largest impacts?

Questions are:

- Do they think that a land survey would have value? Finding out how much productive farm land there is today to target for Ag Preservation.
- Could funding be made available for a survey to help determine this?

- Can a Conservation easement be turned into an Agricultural easement? Providing income stream for the city or HOA?
- Can they provide a numerical score rating to each of the 7 options proposed in draft?

The next committee meeting can be scheduled, but could be postponed or canceled depending on whether the council is able to take a look at the draft, and provide any feedback to it. This may give more direction or focus for next meeting.

Ron mentioned that he thought this should be presented to the City council by someone or as a group to answer questions or provide any additional information of how we came up with what we have today.

Additionally,

Chris mentioned his experience on his property with Washington County assessor and land classification change from Ag residential to Rural residential due to the tax authorities view on what they considered farm land. And the impact that it had on his real estate tax bill because of that change. Along with the efforts it required to get his land reclassified as Agricultural land.

The point being that Real Estate tax classification can be a detriment or incentive to a landowner working with someone who may want to start an Agricultural operation on a small portion of land. E.g. purchase, or lease with the intent to purchase the land.

There could be some real value if there were someone within Afton government that could work with or give direction on how to obtain favorable Ag status, or make the case for appeal if their property was removed from it, thereby incentivizing Ag Preservation.

Mike spoke with a Jay Rigs from Washington County conservation district. He was told, they have information available on mapping system for natural resource protection that gives a high level view of land classification. It did not sound like this would supply what would be needed to show actual land productivity or most valuable Agricultural land. Jay said he would be willing to address this committee and share information.

Mike was waiting for return calls, and had more contacts to continue to see if he could come up with more pertinent information or contacts that might be helpful here.

He also questioned the possibility of reaching out to legislature regarding any funding or grants for this type of project.

Ag. Preservation Committee Memo

Meeting: May 12, 2022

City of Afton
3033 St. Croix Trl, P.O. Box 219
Afton, MN 55001

To: Agriculture Preservation Committee Members

From: Ron Moorse, City Administrator

Date: May 5, 2022

Re: Update Regarding Committee Report Recommendations

The City Council has reviewed and discussed the Ag Preservation Committee's Report and Recommendations, and has approved a mapping analysis of quality ag land in Afton as the basis for identifying and prioritizing ag land for preservation. The Washington Conservation District (WCD) has done numerous mapping projects for Washington County, and has multiple data layers for mapping ag land. Because the preservation of ag land is a priority goal of the WCD, they will provide the mapping at no cost. They also have staff resources whose focus is agriculture, regenerative agriculture, and ag land preservation, who can provide additional assistance as needed.

The Council also reviewed the ag preservation tools recommended by the Committee, and is open to considering the recommended zoning ordinance changes that would facilitate the preservation of ag land. While the purchase of agricultural easements is a good tool to have available, it is not financially feasible without sources of funding outside of city resources, or land owners willing to place ag land in an agricultural easement at no or low cost.