

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS IN WAUSHARA COUNTY

Assembled by Patrick Nehring, UW-Extension Waushara County

Based on the process used by East Central Regional Planning beginning in 1999 and on the 2002 Grant Application for the Wautoma Area.

Adopted by the City of Wautoma, Village of Redgranite, Town of Dakota, Town of Marion, and Town of Wautoma

Wisconsin Statute 66.1001(4)(a)

The governing body of a local government unit shall adopt written procedures that are designed to foster public participation, including open discussion, communication programs, information services and public meetings for which advance notice has been provided, in every stage of the preparation of a comprehensive plan. The written procedures shall provide for wide distribution of proposed, alternative or amended elements of a comprehensive plan and shall provide an opportunity for written comments on the plan to be submitted by members of the public to the governing body and for the governing body to respond to such written comments.

Historical Perspective

The idea of creating a countywide plan began with the formation of the Waushara County Land Use Committee in 1994. The committee is made up of elected officials and local citizens. The county committee decided the best way to create a countywide plan was to combine the plans of the various municipalities in the county. Because the first groups of municipalities began before the state changed the definition and process to create a plan in Wisconsin, a public participation plan was not official created for the first groups of communities. Even though there was no official public participation plan, public participation was a key component in the creation of those plans. The public participation plan that follows has the same public participation methods the county has been using from the beginning.

Planning Process and Public Participation

The planning process is divided into 6 parts or components. The municipalities involved in the multi-jurisdictional comprehensive plan will meet as a group for most of the first 4 components. For the last 2 components of the comprehensive plan, the municipalities will meet more independently from one another.

The first component is organizing to start the planning process. Informational presentations on how to organize to begin the planning process are given at the participating town board meetings and at multi-jurisdictional public meetings. Committee members are recruited by the plan commission members and the local elected officials. Once the comprehensive planning committees are formed, a meeting will be held to go over the process and explain what to expect. The public participation methods used in this component are: citizen comprehensive planning committees / plan commissions, participation at plan development meetings and informational meetings, written comment, county land use committee, newspaper and radio, informational presentations at local organization meetings, informational brochures, and a web site on comprehensive planning.

In the second component of the process, Context for Evaluation, the committee will look at area demographics, natural resources, historical resources, and cultural resources, transportation statistics, and other background information. Included in this component is a survey of local residents and/or property owners. The third component is Issue Identification and Visioning. The committee will use the data and information from the previous component to identify the issues and opportunities in the area. The committee will come up with a vision of what the future of the area should be. Goals, Objectives, and Policies for the area will be developed during the fourth component of the planning process. The idea is that the individual municipalities support some area wide goals, objectives, and perhaps some common strategies in the fourth component, but allow each municipality to develop strategies that work for their individual community in the fifth component. In the fifth component, Recommendations and Implementation Strategies to implement the goals, objectives, and policies will be added to the plan. When each component is completed, it will be presented to the town board, village board, or city council for their review, comment, and approval. When all participating municipalities approve the component, it will be considered finished and will serve without change as a reference for the following components, unless a major change takes place in the community during the planning process and needs to be addressed. All of the public participation methods will be used in these components, except for a public hearing.

The final component of the plan is its adoption. Following the last open house or public comment meeting the members of the plan commission will adopt a resolution to recommend the comprehensive plan. Then a public hearing will be held followed by the adoption by the Town Board, Village Board, or City Council. The public participation methods that will continue to be used for this component of the planning process are: written comment, distribution of draft copies, county land use committee, newspaper and radio, informational presentations at local organization meetings, and informational brochures and web site on comprehensive planning.

Public Participation Methods

The following public participation methods will be utilized in the comprehensive planning process described above.

Citizen Comprehensive Planning Committee / Plan Commission

A citizen committee consisting of citizens from a variety of backgrounds will develop the plan. Included on the committee will be members of the plan commission. The elected local officials in the municipality can serve on the committee, but the chair of the committee will be a local citizen. It is felt that having a government official, an authority figure, as the chair would discourage people from offering an opposing viewpoint and hinder discussion. The committee may invite key citizens for specific issues and not require them to remain active members throughout the process. The planning consultant from East Central Regional Planning Commission facilitates the meeting, provides some of the background research, and writes the document. University of Wisconsin-Extension provides education on topics of concern to the committee and issues related to the plan to enable the committee to make informed decisions. The planning committee decides what is included in the plan and approves the contents of the final document with ultimate adoption authority lying with the Plan Commission members and the Town Board, Village Board, or City Council as per Statute 66.1001.

Participation at Plan Development Meetings and Informational Meetings

Local residents and interested parties are encouraged to attend the comprehensive planning committee meetings and informational meetings throughout the process. During the process the committee may invite key citizens for specific issues. Non-committee members can participate as equals throughout the meeting in the discussion of the topic at hand, but will be discouraged from straying from the agenda to bring up issues that were covered at previous meetings. An announcement of every meeting is sent to the local newspapers and radio stations by East Central RPC. In addition, agendas are sent to the towns, village, and city to be posted at the municipal building or bulletin board.

Open Houses / Public Comment Meetings

In addition to participating in the regular meetings to develop the plan, the public will be invited to attend open houses or public comment meetings at key points in the process. At these meetings a brief summary of the plan to date will be given and the public will be given an opportunity to comment on the plan to the comprehensive planning committee. These meetings will take place as each of the 4 components identified in the process are near completion, as well as, prior to the public hearing upon the completion of the plan. The public comment meeting or open house may take place at a regular Town Board, Village Board, City Council, or the Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting.

Written Comment

Written comment will be taken throughout the process either on paper or electronically. Comments may be sent to East Central RPC, the Waushara County UW-Extension office, or the local government. Copies of all comments will be given to the planning consultant from East Central RPC, the municipal comprehensive planning committee chair, and the corresponding town, village, or city clerk. A town, village, or city official will respond by acknowledge receipt of the written comments at a municipal meeting or in writing and that the comment has been shared with the planning committee chair, the planning consultant, and the town board, village board, or city council.

Public Hearing

A public hearing will be held in accordance to Wisconsin Statute 66.1001(4)(d) prior to the town board, village board, or city council adopting the comprehensive plan. The town board, village board, or city council will publish a class one notice at least 30 days prior to the public hearing. The notice will include 1) the date, time, and place of the public hearing, 2) a summary of the comprehensive plan, 3) a contact information, and 4) where the plan can be viewed.

Community Survey

The town, village, or city will mail out a survey to all of the residents and/or property owners in the municipality or a statistically valid sample number of them. Residents and/or property owners will be asked a series of questions to determine their values, preferences, and opinions about the municipality. The committee will use the survey results to create the plan.

Distribution of Draft Copies

Draft copies of each of the components of the plan will be available at the local library, the town/village/city hall, and other locations as determined by the committee and the planning consultant.

County Land Use Committee

The public is welcome to attend the Waushara County Land Use Committee meetings. The County Land Use Committee meets monthly. At their meetings, the chairs of the municipal comprehensive planning committees report on the progress, issues, and activities of their respective committee. Monthly preliminary drafts of the municipal comprehensive plans are distributed.

Newsletter

A periodic newsletter will be distributed to local officials in the participating municipalities, elected officials in the surrounding communities, and anyone who express an interest in receiving it.

Newspaper and Radio

East Central RPC will send a press release to the area newspaper and radio stations announcing all meetings of the comprehensive land use committee and meetings for public comment. In addition, East Central RPC will periodically send a press release out on the progress of the plan. The local media will be encouraged to attend and report on what takes place at the comprehensive planning committee meetings.

Informational Presentations at Local Organization Meetings

UW-Extension will request to be invited to speak to local organizations on the planning process that is taking place in the county. As part of the presentation members of the local organizations will be encourage to participate in the planning process and at least read the papers and look at draft copies of the plan to stay informed about the comprehensive planning that is taking place.

Informational Brochures and Web Site on Comprehensive Planning

UW-Extension has produced a couple of general informational brochures on planning and public participation. The brochures are in English and Spanish. With the assistance of the comprehensive planning committee members, the brochures will be distributed to local libraries, business, and other locations where people gather. In addition, a display with the brochures will be put up at the Waushara County Fair. A web site created by UW-Extension provides additional information on planning, the meeting dates of the municipal comprehensive planning committees, and the activities of the Waushara County Land Use Committee.

If you have any questions regarding Planning in Waushara County, please contact:

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