

**AGRITOURISM TASK FORCE
MINUTES
July 16, 2007
2:30 P.M.
CONFERENCE ROOM A**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Marc Munaretto, Chairman
Michelle Aavang, farmer
Patti Nomm, Health Department
Pat McNulty, Health Department
Robert Richardson, farmer
George Richardson, farmer
Wendy Richardson, farmer
Rich Tobiasz, Fire District
Matt Hansel, Planning & Development
SuzAnne Ehardt, Planning & Development
Dan Volkens, McHenry County Farm Bureau
Mary McCann, County Board
Randy Donley, County Board

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Cort Carlson, McHenry Cty CVB
Virginia Peschke, County Board
Tracie Von Bergen, farmer

OTHERS PRESENT

Andy Andresky
Preston Rea

Chairman Munaretto called the meeting of the task force to order at 2:30 p.m. in Conference Room A of the McHenry County Government Center Administration Building.

MINUTES

Minutes from the previous meeting have not been completed as of this date. Once completed, they will be submitted for review and acceptance.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

PRESENTATIONS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Pat McNulty and Patti Nomm brought the task force members up to date regarding the amendments being proposed to Article X which would allow the use of portable toilets beyond the current regulations. The use of portable toilets are proposed to be expanded to include uses that are seasonal and/or temporary in nature (page 6). A definition of seasonal/temporary has been added (page 4). Other amendments proposed included page 26 (seasonal/temporary food service to include concession stands) additional controls added to pages 26 and 27 and setbacks for chemical/privy toilets (page 44).

NEW BUSINESS

Preston Rea commented that if field workers are removed from the primary operation then the use of portable toilets should be considered. He noted that this is not necessarily the purview of the Agritourism Task Force but it should be considered by the Health Department.

Randy Donley noted that there is nothing that prohibits agritourism from operating today and that the decision to operate is solely up to the operator, however, you have to be willing to meet ordinance requirements in effect. In response, the Richardson's indicated they are not opposed to installing a septic for worker's just not for customers.

Randy Donley indicated he is opposed to doing away with the conditional use permit process. George Richardson noted that the task force is designed to determine ways to encourage agritourism, not just help the Richardson's. He also noted that he would not be opposed to a combination of portable and flush toilets.

Chairman Munaretto noted that the Article X amendments that were discussed, would need to be submitted to the Board of Health, then to the Public Health and Human Services Committee of the McHenry County Board and then ultimately to the McHenry County Board for adoption. Dan Volkens commented, the sooner the better.

A general discussion ensued regarding the purpose of agritourism, the task force and the intent to allow farmers to supplement farm income through agritourism. The process of certification of an agritourism business for three (3) years prior to requiring a conditional use permit was discussed. (See attachment). This could be an administrative process where an application is submitted to staff who then brings the application before the Planning & Development Committee with a copy to Health Department.

There was some discussion regarding requiring membership on the Convention & Visitors Bureau as a precursor to obtaining certification. Mary McCann indicated she was opposed to requiring membership on the Bureau and was also opposed to requiring a minimum of fifty (50) acres in order to obtain certification and indicated that she thought it should be much smaller. Andy Andresky indicated it shouldn't be limited by size, only by use.

Randy Donley questioned whether a five acre parcel is realistic for agritourism if the original purpose of promoting agritourism was to supplement the farm income. In response, several members indicated that it would be sufficient for such uses as orchards, vineyards, vegetables, etc. It was noted that these uses are agricultural and do not require any additional zoning in order to be allowed in the agricultural district. Randy Donley also commented that for agritourism to occur without benefit of a conditional use permit equates to a lack of notice to adjoining property owners who may be adversely impacted by a more intense use of the property.

Chairman Munaretto noted that the task force will merely make recommendations to the Committee who will then forward on to the full County Board. No changes to the existing process can occur without the majority vote of the County Board.

Rich Tobiasz submitted his written comments regarding agritourism and his thoughts on recommendations that he believed should come from the task force regarding agritourism (see attached). His written comments covered issues related to registration vs. non-registration, licensing and the requirement that all "agritourism" be required to be a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

Chairman Munaretto indicated that previously some thought had been given to allow a transitional proposal which would permit the use for a period of time (possibly three years) to determine whether it was a feasible use and if so, require application for a conditional use permit at that time.

In response to Chairman Munaretto, Pat McNulty commented that there is nothing proposed in the ordinance amendments that would allow neighbor comments regarding a proposal of this nature on adjoining property. Mary McCann noted that if you are zoned agriculture you have the right to use portable toilets and don't need to consult with your neighbors.

A general discussion followed regarding short term temporary uses versus long term temporary uses and the impact on what was being discussed as alternatives to the requirements presently in effect. Dan Volkens noted that the task force needs to be cognizant of private property owner rights and that adjacent notice generally causes fewer problems in the long run than no notice at all. He also suggested that consideration could be given to determining what would be required (registration, zoning, etc.) based upon the percentage of sales of non-agricultural related products. Chairman Munaretto noted that this could be a recommendation for consideration but the final determination would be the County Board's to make.

Additional discussion followed regarding the issue of renewal. It was determined that there could be the requirement to obtain a conditional use permit at the end of three years or a continuous renewal by administrative staff in conjunction with the Planning & Development Committee. Staff noted concerns regarding arbitrary and capricious decisions.

Mary McCann commented that she liked Rich Tobiasz' recommendations.

It was the consensus of the Task Force, that the findings of the Task Force as it relates to the topic of agritourism and the discussion of existing regulations, in conjunction with recommendations be condensed into a written document to be forwarded to the Planning & Development Committee upon review by the task force. A tentative meeting date of September was discussed to review the document which is intended to be completed and forwarded to members in advance of that meeting. Mary McCann indicated that the specialty growers should be engaged in this process again.

As a final note, Chairman Munaretto indicated that staff will prepare a "white paper" on agritourism including the what and the why followed by the task force recommendations which will ultimately be submitted to the County Board with a follow-up meeting of the task force in approximately eight weeks to review the document prior to submission to the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.