Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Update Committee

DATE: Wednesday, August 10, 2011
TIME: 6:40 p.m.
PLACE: Brookens Administrative Center
John Dimit Conference Room
1776 E. Washington St.
Urbana, Illinois

Voting Members Present: Debra Griest, Liz Jones, Kyle Krapf, Steve Moser, Pattsi Petrie, Steve Stierwalt, Bruce Stikkers

Voting Members Absent: Kevin Donoho, Kyle Krapf

Non-Voting Member Present: John Hall

Others Present: Hal Barnhart, Jon Schroeder, Norm Stenzel

CCRPC Facilitator: Susan Monte

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
Ms. Monte called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. The roll was taken by written record and a quorum was declared present.

2. Approval of Agenda
Ms. Petrie introduced a motion to permanently relocate the Public Participation section of the meeting to appear immediately following Approval of the Agenda. Ms. Griest seconded the motion. Ms. Petrie said that she believes it is preferable to allow members of the public who attend the meeting with comments to share these comments earlier in the meeting so that Committee members have the benefit of these comments and are able to have a discussion at the same meeting. Ms. Griest asked for a friendly amendment to add a timeframe on the public participation to avoid the potential for the meeting to be fully consumed by public participation. Mr. Stikkers suggested 5 minutes as a limit. Ms. Petrie accepted the friendly amendment. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Jones moved to add an item to the Agenda to discuss scheduling of the August 24 meeting. Ms. Petrie seconded the motion. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.
Ms. Griest moved to approve the agenda as modified. Ms. Jones seconded the motion. Upon vote, the motion carried unanimously.

3. Public Participation
Mr. Norman Stenzel said that he has a two-part handout for the Committee: the first part is ‘Possibilities for Site Assessment Factors’ which includes a rationale for the second part which includes factors that address some of his ideas (e.g., community agriculture) especially regarding the breadth of agriculture mentioned at the last meeting. He said a number of items included that are under the heading ‘conversion attribute’ support the preservation of agriculture. He said sometimes conversion itself will support agriculture so he tried to give a number of items to show that this: items 7-10. He said that this is a way of giving those items some weight that they would not get in the original LESA format which ends in zero is used, and that the items he proposes give conversion some weight by using a negative number, taking away points allocated in support of preservation and viability of agriculture. As examples, he said that conversion that is compact and tangent to communities should be encouraged, or if a site has direct access to a community’s services of sewage and water, conversion at that site could be encouraged.

4. New Business
Ms. Monte said the draft update of the LE portion was distributed in the packet for this meeting and she encouraged members to comment or ask questions about the draft. She said LE related questions could be forwarded to Mr. Donoho for his comment. She described the draft LE update as including two versions: one modeled after the LE portion of the DeKalb County LESA where slope was used as one classification criteria, and the other version based on the three classification systems more commonly used.

Mr. Hall said that currently he is at a loss as how he would choose between draft Versions A and B. He gave two examples of soils that have higher relative values under draft Version A (than under the current LE scoring system and he asked why some soils end up with a better relative value than they have under the existing LE. Mr. Moser pointed out that one soil mentioned by John occurs over only a very small area of the County. Mr. Hall said then it is probably not that important of a soil then. He said he was not sure what the community reaction to the adjustments will be. Ms. Petrie said that Mr. Hall’s question hasn’t been answered.

Mr. Hall said the updated LE draft leads to the issue of whether the relative value of 85 will remain as the defining LE of best prime farmland, since the LE of 85 is based on a different way of calculating LE. He said that the County Board will need to consider this.

Ms. Petrie asked Mr. Moser to describe more of his ideas regarding increasing the relative value of the best prime farmland. Mr. Moser said that there are really four soils in this County that are dominant: Drummer, Flanagan, Elburn, and Brenton, with the acreage for each of these soils listed in the draft LE versions. Ms. Petrie asked how the LE should be updated to put a lot of weight on those four, and what would be the means to do this. Mr. Hall said that those four soils are always going to be the top soils and that everyone understands that to be true. He said that the issue comes in two or three levels below that.

Ms. Griest said that includes parcels with mixed soils. Mr. Stikkers said the weighted averages of these soils would be considered. Ms. Griest said the current methodology for the weighting does not provide the best protection to the largest parcels of the best prime farmland and move the development away from them. It protects those that have just a little bit of best prime and raises the rating of the whole parcel, where, in fact, maybe the predominance in the parcel is not Drummer or Flanagan.
Ms. Monte reiterated that the draft LE versions represent a different system of calculating the LE and the Committee may want to make a recommendation to the County Board regarding an LE score on which to base the definition of best prime farmland. Ms. Monte encouraged further input regarding the draft LE versions to be considered, as the Committee continues toward a recommendation.

Ms. Petrie questioned the Committee’s goal as maintaining as much of the farmland as possible as farmland as opposed to another goal the Committee may identify.

Ms. Monte said that, based on materials she’s read about the LESA development in Wisconsin, one common obstacle encountered by LESA committees occurs when policy discussions and policies are questions. She recommended that the Committee use the County’s adopted LRMP goals, objectives and policies as a guide. She said LRMP Goal 4 is clear and states “Champaign County will protect the long term viability of agriculture in Champaign County and its land resource base.”

Mr. Hall said the purpose of LESA remains unchanged as he understands it. He said the Committee discussed that, with the LESA purpose remaining the same, do we want to consider a different mix of factors which he thinks was a great decision. He has observed that if the site assessment factors being considered by this Committee are grouped as to whether they relate to productivity, plan consistency, development suitability or other considerations, this Committee has selected factors that relate to Productivity, compatibility and plan consistency, which I think makes the update to the LESA that you are working on potentially one of the strongest that I’ve seen. Because everybody else puts most of their points on development suitability which is just not related to productivity, not at all. Sure it gives them high values. He said that personally he would not want to try to defend those values as they relate to farmland, because they are a function of development suitability. The purpose of LESA is the same: unchanged. What the Committee really has to be comfortable with is the focus, and right now the Committee is heading toward productivity, compatibility and plan consistency.

Ms. Petrie said it is good to realize that the LRMP is the basis of guidance for the LESA update. She said she would like the Committee to consider how much weight to place on the ‘optimum soil productivity index.’

Ms. Griest said she thought or assumed that the optimum productivity index was based upon the larger population of all of the productivity on those types of soils—from a sampling of all those—not just a single parcel that may or may not have a good steward who’s managing the land well and is either highly productive or highly non-productive based upon their farming technique. So this was based on a broader based sample. Ms. Petrie said that was correct, and that a sub-issue is that we are using that index overall but it may not really apply overall. Ms. Griest said that is where she was confused. Ms. Petrie said if in fact the index is X but the same type of soil has not been well maintained, then that index of X would not apply to that site.

Mr. Stierwalt said the potential is what is the productivity index is telling you. He said that it doesn’t really tell you what it’s going to make or not make, but that a type of soil has a potential and that potential is relative to the potential of other soils. He said it’s not an absolute value but a relative value as he understands it.

Ms. Jones said a parcel may have different farmers over the years so it’s necessary to look at averages.
MINUTES – AS APPROVED

Mr. Stikkers said that the optimum productivity index score shouldn’t depend on a good farmer versus a poor farmer. He said this is based on a state-wide basis, so that there may be some variability between certain areas of the state. He said he thinks it is by far the closest to a reasonable thing we could work with and that it’s not perfect but close.

6. Old Business

Ms. Monte said the Committee started to review the 11 selected draft site assessment factors at the last meeting and made some additional comments regarding the initial five of the draft factors. She said that she and Mr. Hall considered that a working draft of the site assessment factors would serve to better facilitate the Committee in their review. She distributed a handout to facilitate committee discussion today. Ms. Monte said the definitions provided for ‘agriculture’ and ‘agricultural production’ are provided since these are referenced in several factors. She suggested the Committee settle on a definition of these terms, as the factors are further defined. Regarding the working draft, she said that: Factor 10 seemed nearly identical to Factor 2 and that is why it is shown as shaded at present; Factor 3 is adjusted to measure the suitability of a site modeled on a site assessment factor included in the Kendall County LESA which focuses on the recent usage of a site; and Factor 7 is shown with options for increasing the livestock management facility size to 400, 500 or 1,000 animal units and with fewer points. She said that factors for density of non-farm dwellings and public assembly sites have been separated out.

Ms. Petrie said in looking at Penn State’s website and we are not covering a number of things that we talked about in previous conversations that they seem to include in theirs. She said it might be interesting to discuss the ideas that Mr. Stenzel has proposed regarding using some negative points to get to where we’d like to get regarding where development occurs in the County. Regarding the Penn State site, she said that the Committee talked about agricultural or woodland uses, and streams, and we don’t have any factor about that. She said that Penn State considers ‘century farms,’ and that Champaign County has the highest number of registered ‘centennial farms’ in the state and that is an aspect that the Committee has not talked about yet. She said that her understanding of Mr. Stenzel’s proposal is that negative points would encourage development to occur in areas better suited to it.

Ms. Monte asked for Committee feedback regarding the idea of building in a negative point system to the County’s LESA.

Mr. Stierwalt said he would need additional time outside of the discussion forum to more carefully consider that proposal. Ms. Griest concurred and said based on her initial review of Mr. Stenzel’s proposal, she feels that although the points he raises are important points, she thinks the factors that the Committee already selected capture the essence of those factors and some of them quite strongly. She said the language proposed to introduce negatives into a process might serve to further confuse the general population who is generally trying to digest this information. She thinks the information that the Committee needs to produce needs to be crisp, clear, concise, non-subjective, and easily digested by any citizen, whether from an agricultural background or from a municipality since this will be considered from both perspectives. She said that in her husband’s family there is a Centennial Farm and she doesn’t think the LESA protection is a valid tool for protecting Centennial Farms nor does she think it belongs in the LESA document because the Centennial Farm is about the ownership within the same family, and if it’s important to a family to have declared it as a centennial Farm, it’s going to be equally as important to that family to protect it and they’re not going to be offering it for development. So I don’t think those are parcels that are at risk, unless they genuinely need to convert that agricultural ground into some type of retirement nest egg or they have no other options. She said that she is not in favor of adding negative scores to the LESA document, and that based on her initial blush, she believes the points are captured within the essence of the factors that we already have in play.
Ms. Petrie said that her understanding of a reason to include a factor regarding centennial farms would be to protect the sites that are adjacent to the centennial farm. Mr. Moser observed that several centennial farm sites along Staley Road in Champaign have been developed and he thinks that once a property is within the 1-1/2 mile of Champaign, a landowner could find it too difficult to put up with the development in the area.

Mr. Hall said he thought the Committee had put both draft Factor 4 and 5 on hold. Ms. Petrie said she thought that the distance shown in draft Factor 5 was to be changed based on the DeKalb County example.

Ms. Monte said that draft Factor 4 was on hold with a note to consider reducing the scope from 1-1/2 to 1 or possibly adjacent.

Ms. Petrie said that she recalled the Committee discussion regarding draft Factor 5 was that we should change from 1-1/2 mile to 1 mile in the rating portion of that draft factor, and not be bound by that particular parameter.

Ms. Petrie said another Penn State LESA factor is included regarding conservation easements, under the ‘clustering’ heading. She said the Penn State LESA is set up in three categories: development, farmland, and clustering.

Mr. Stikkers said there are different groups that provide easements, so it would be necessary to define who the easement authority is since that is variable.

Mr. Stierwalt said that if the Committee’s charge was to protect fragile areas, then he would agree that points should be allocated to conservation easements. He said that he thinks that prime farmland is what should be protected by the LESA and that is what the focus of this Committee and he does not think conservation easements should be protected. Mr. Stikkers concurred.

Ms. Petrie said that in previous conversations the Committee had related prime farmland to the streams and woodlands. She said that this has been lost and the Committee is not addressing any of this in the selected draft factors.

Mr. Stikkers said the Committee had set that aside and still has not been reincorporated back into the draft. Ms. Petrie said the Committee previously discussed that a potential approach might be that a streams and woodlands rating system would become a second tier of LESA for what is being considered on the land as a decision model.

Mr. Stierwalt asked whether specifics such as the amounts suggested for draft Factor 7 should be discussed.

Ms. Monte said any part of the draft site assessment factors are open for discussion, that her concern is being able to consistently measure each of the draft factors. She said the suggested framework of points should be reviewed. She said that Pattsí has brought up a topic previously considered by the Committee-developing a second tier of LESA review—which would involve examining the definition of ‘agriculture’ and figuring out a new system and that this might be a spin-off for another task to update the LESA, and may be beyond the scope of this update.

Ms. Petrie asked if there is a better way to handle the livestock management facility aspect, because one thing confirmed recently on a farm tour visit is that the chance of actually knowing how much livestock is at any one site is probably very difficult and that type of measurement is likely to be inaccurate. She said
she cannot consider this as having measurable criteria and she asked why ‘livestock’ has its own factor if it is already included in the definition of agriculture.

Ms. Monte restated that Ms. Petrie is concerned about the accuracy of measuring a livestock management facility with regard to the ongoing number of animal units there at any particular time. She said that the data available from the USDA and IEPA relates to the permitted facility capacity and so that speaks to the maximum capacity of what each facility is built for. She said that is the best available indicator and that the data will probably be updated each year. She said she’s been told that IEPA would release this database for planning purposes this fall and that now it is available via a FOIA request.

Mr. Hall asked to confirm whether the number listed for each livestock management facility is to be based on a notice of intent filed with the Illinois Department of Agriculture. He said he thinks that is fair because that is what a landowner has gone on record with a filed notice of intent. He said he would think the County would want to take that into account. He said that livestock is even more incompatible with non-agricultural development than row crop production. He said that if the purpose here is to find a way to protect farmland, I think the actual presence of livestock should merit some extra points and 10 points is a relatively minor amount of points and will not leave a lot of points on the table if there are no livestock. He said that every 10 points is helpful.

Mr. Stierwalt said this factor might also consider whether the facility is actually used as opposed to it maybe being used in the last five years, or as opposed to someone building a facility and maybe never intending to use it and having it just to scare away neighbors.

Mr. Stikkers said some facilities could be abandoned because there might be some landowners who get out of the livestock business with no plans to have livestock may for financial reasons decide not to tear down the facility. He said there would have to be some way to find out whether the facility was abandoned or not.

Ms. Griest asked whether every farmstead that has livestock have a permit as a livestock management facility. Committee members answered ‘no’. Ms. Griest asked what is the animal unit threshold for needing a livestock management facilities permit. She said, as an example, if someone has 50 hogs in a barnyard area and somebody wants to build a subdivision next to that property, we need a factor that captures that because it’s going to be a really big deal. She said that those hogs need to be protected since that operation is vital to that farm and that farm’s economic well-being. To subject them to development next door or within a quarter mile is substantial. She said having sat on the ZBA for 10 years, she thinks this is a really important factor. She said that not only does this factor give you points, it also discloses that information in a manner that may not otherwise get disclosed. She said that she is advocating for this factor and that the Committee has to include a livestock factor. She leans to the lower end of the threshold for counting animal units, and not for putting the threshold at 1,000. She said 400 seems high and that she would like a lower number than that.

Mr. Stikkers said that it would not take very many hogs adjacent to a subdivision to cause a built-in problem. Ms. Griest concurred that would be a recurring, major problem.

Ms. Jones said that just living on the farmstead next to the pigs, you know where you live. Ms. Griest said that quite frankly city folks don’t belong right next to the pigs. Mr. Moser said that with chickens, it’s worse. Ms. Jones said that she thinks regarding the number of animal units, if the Committee is thinking of preserving the agricultural value of the land, then in reality, the number should really be nominal amount.
Mr. Hall said that he agrees with Ms. Griest and that he believes that it is not real difficult to buy 50 hogs just to spite your neighbor’s planned subdivision. Ms. Griest said that is why she asked the permitting question—at what point is state permitting required. Mr. Hall said that he understands that if we measure this based only on those who have gone through the permitting process the way the law anticipates, then that’s a minority of livestock operations he believes. He said that he has seen cases at the ZBA with people with livestock operations who did not even know about Livestock Facilities Management Act separation requirements. He said he would encourage this to be based on the Champaign County values, as established by the County Board. Ms. Griest requested clarification. Mr. Hall said that this Committee does not know what the County Board thinks about livestock facilities.

Ms. Monte said that staff could provide the answers to the Committee to questions raised by Ms. Griest regarding the State livestock permitting requirements.

Ms. Griest said she believes this tool is one piece in the development matrix, but that this Committee should focus on the agricultural protection, not the development side. She said having one of these factors included, regardless of the weighting, gives the ZBA and the County Board an invaluable tool that they may not otherwise have in their toolbox to assess those development questions. So she said that she needs a livestock question to be included.

Ms. Petrie said that she still cannot understand why we don’t accomplish this by the definition of agriculture that we accept and why we don’t raise points for the other criteria included. The point is to preserve the agricultural aspects within the county and agricultural aspects are being defined by a whole plethora of possibilities in the definition—one of which is livestock. Ms. Griest said that, for herself, that all agricultural uses are not equal, with some of them being more onerous or needing more separation from development than others. She said for example that pigs need more separation than corn. Ms. Jones added, ‘or than a sod farm.’ Ms. Jones said, as an example, the Pinetree Subdivision, of 60 to 80 homes, is built around a horse stable and there are horses maintained and the pastures are scenic areas to live around. She said that everybody wants to live around that and that if pigs were there instead of horses, that would change drastically. She said that just because you have development, does that mean that the farmer cannot have pigs next door.

Mr. Stierwalt said he liked Deb’s point regarding disclosure and that in addition to listing whether a livestock management facility exists, that whatever the livestock is ought to be noted.

Ms. Griest said, as another example, she and her husband visited a landowner of a field of wheat stubble ground, and that farmer had a hog facility, and the common practice is to inject the manure into the field, into the wheat stubble. Ms. Griest said this was not a problem for her since she has no sense of smell but that smell was a real issue for her husband. She said it’s more than just where the animals are physically located, that the smells associated with maintaining the animals go beyond the fence that contains the animals.

Ms. Jones said the number should then be 10 or 20, and that 400 is too high since there are not that many and we'd not be giving points to much.

Ms. Petrie said she thinks the disclosure concept is good and might apply to other factors. She said for example, Factor 1, percentage of area in agricultural use within one mile of the subject site, there is no discussion there as to what the agricultural use is, so how important is it that there is disclosure along the way regarding any of these criteria as to what exactly is the agricultural use based on the descriptors being laid out in relationship to livestock. She said that if we could solve it that way, then the weight of points could be changed to 30 or 25 and 25 which would capture it and also capture exactly what type of agriculture use is happening within these areas and then, maybe if it’s appropriate, these agricultural
uses could be grouped based on degree of less onerous, more onerous, etc. She said one could make arguments regarding what is onerous about working with farm machinery and it’s huge and it has to move a lot, are the roads wide enough, and other things.

She said that maybe what we can do is capture these concerns and do it in ways that relate to other criteria and really strengthen the weighting of those—not what the points should be—but the weighting of them.

Ms. Griest said to recap briefly, you would propose an item that would define row crop, livestock, orchards, something along that line, with different point values for protection.

Ms. Petrie agreed and said that this would be based on what Steve said about disclosure. She said the Committee has not talked about disclosure for any of the other criteria, but have zeroed in on livestock. She said maybe the Committee should look at the whole umbrella of agricultural uses, no matter which definition is settled on, she said there is such a wide variety of agricultural uses and this may be a way of capturing that and getting to the effect of what people are expressing concerns about.

Mr. Stierwalt said he understands Pattsi’s point, and that he thinks his point was that the preponderance of the County is thought of as being row crop agriculture. The reason he was thinking that, in this County, that having a livestock facility is against the norm. Everybody thinks of row crop agriculture, and livestock facilities add another dimension that most people wouldn’t necessarily think of.

Ms. Petrie agreed and said that it took 20 plus years to update the LESA this time and that 20 years ahead there is no guarantee that row crop will be predominant 10 years down the line. She said that if this is a document that will not be updated again for another decade, then we might want to think about those aspects as they might be applicable down the line.

Mr. Hall said this is a fascinating discussion because reading the LESA right now, you wouldn’t know that there is a base line of row crop and that is what the people who live here expect in the rural area. He said there is one single LESA number, and you don’t know what it means about the agriculture that is actually occurring, whether there is any livestock, how much livestock, or if there is a nationally known local producer of cheese within ½ mile of the property. He said he is not for making LESA so complicated and cumbersome so that it is more difficult to use than it currently is. He said right now he thinks the County gets a tremendous value for the LESA effort. He said he believes they might get more value if it what you were just discussing could be disclosed in a way that does not require a lot of staff time, is easy to do and yet adds a lot of value to that one single number that right now nobody knows what it means. He said that is something that he would like to work on—a way to disclose the kinds of things you two were discussing. He said that in the write up for the revised LESA it might be good to make it clear that when there is a rating on agriculture that it is assumed to be row crop, and when not row crop, then to identify the level at which something else needs to be called out. He said this may be too difficult, he still believes that if there is a nationally known producer of cheese, or a regional orchard, or something similar, that should be disclosed in some manner. For practical purposes, in a zoning case, this would be disclosed. He said that since LESA is the flagship for the protection of agriculture, that we should find an easy way to somehow make this clear, and so a new planner applying LESA would know that if row crop is present, then no special treatment, if livestock present, that’s unique, or a large local food production related to that, then that’s also unique.

Ms. Monte said that meeting end time is approaching and encouraged members to forward review comments regarding the handout distributed, including comments regarding weighting factors, or revising point allocation. She said that among the tasks ahead are testing the draft factors on a sample of four known sites and then randomly selecting up to 10 sites for additional testing by the Committee.
Ms. Petrie requested that the draft site assessment factor list be expanded to include some other variables reviewed during the meeting today to find out how some of these might work or not work. She said that some Pennsylvania county examples may include factor types that could be considered, such as a farm’s contribution to the community, or with regard to serving as a source of local food.

Ms. Monte requested the Committee consider Ms. Petrie’s request to start the next Committee meeting at 6:00 pm instead of 6:30 pm. Committee members agreed to the proposed one-time change in scheduling and agreed to a starting time of 6:00 pm for the August 24 Committee meeting.

7. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Monte adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.
Defined Terms:

**Agriculture** [Agricultural Uses] as defined in CC Zoning Ordinance and CC LRMP

"The growing, harvesting and storing of crops including legumes, hay, grain, fruit and truck or vegetable crops, floriculture, horticulture, mushroom growing, orchards, forestry and the keeping, raising and feeding of livestock or poultry, including dairying, poultry, swine, sheep, beef cattle, pony and horse production, fur farms, and fish and wildlife farms; farm buildings used for growing, harvesting and preparing crop products for market, or for use on the farm; roadside stands, farm buildings for storing and protecting farm machinery and equipment from the elements, for housing livestock or poultry and for preparing livestock or poultry products for market; farm dwellings occupied by farm owners, operators, tenants or seasonal or year-round hired farm workers. It is intended by this definition to include within the definition of agriculture all types of agriculture operations, but to exclude therefrom industrial operations such as a grain elevator, canning or slaughterhouse, wherein agricultural products produced primarily by others are stored or processed. Agricultural purposes include, without limitation, the growing, developing, processing, conditioning, or selling of hybrid seed corn, seed beans, seed oats, or other farm seeds."

Example: Kendall County defined terms:

**Agricultural Production:**

An operation involving production of crops (including but not limited to grains, row crops, seed crops, vegetables, fruits, nuts, hay, forage, sod or pasture, orchards or vineyards, plant materials and timber) and/or production, growing, raising or reproducing livestock or livestock products (including but not limited to dairy cattle, beef cattle, poultry, turkeys, swine, sheep or goats.) In addition, land enrolled in a conservation program, with an installed agricultural best management practice (grassed waterway, filter strip, water and sediment control basin, grade stabilization structures, etc.), a farm pond and associated farmstead structures, shall also be considered as part of an agricultural operation.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Percentage of area in agricultural uses within 1 mile of subject site.</td>
<td>75% or more: 20 points, 50% to 74%: 15 points, 25% to 49%: 10 points, Less than 25%: 5 points, 0 points</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Area adjacent to subject site that is being used for production agriculture.</td>
<td>All sides in production agriculture: 20 points, 3 sides: 15 points, 2 sides: 10 points, 1 side: 5 points, None: 0 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Percentage of subject site in or suitable for agricultural uses.</td>
<td>80% to 100%: 10 points, 60% to 79%: 8 points, 40% to 59%: 6 points, 20% to 39%: 2 points, Less than 20%: 0 points</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Percentage of site in agricultural production in any of the last 5 years.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Percentage of land zoned AG-1 Agriculture, AG-2 Agriculture, or CR Conservation-Recreation within 1 mile of subject site.</td>
<td>75% or more: 10 points, 50% to 74%: 8 points, 25% to 49%: 6 points, 10% to 24%: 4 points, Less than 24%: 0 points</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Distance from the subject site to the nearest city or village limits.</td>
<td>Greater than 1.5 miles: 20 points, 0.75 mile to 1.5 miles: 10 points, Less than 0.75 mile: 0 points</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Is the subject site located within the ‘Contiguous Urban Growth Area’ of the Champaign County Land Resource Management Plan?</td>
<td>located outside of the Contiguous Urban Growth Area: 50 points, located within the Contiguous Urban Growth Area: 0 points</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>How close is the subject site to livestock management facilities of {400, 500, or 1,000} or more animal units?</td>
<td>Adjacent: 10 points, 0.25 mile to less than adjacent: 8 points, 0.26 to 0.50 mile: 6 points, 0.51 to 0.74 mile: 4 points, 0.75 to 1.0 mile: 2 points, More than 1.0 mile: 0 points</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>What is the distance from the subject site to the nearest public assembly land use (e.g., a church or school)?</td>
<td>More than 1.0 mile: 10 points, 0.75 to 1.0 mile: 8 points, 0.51 to 0.74 mile: 6 points, 0.26 to 0.50 mile: 4 points, 0.25 mile to less than adjacent: 2 points, Adjacent: 0 points</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>What is the distance from the subject site to the nearest 10 or more ‘non-farm’ dwellings?</td>
<td>More than 1.0 mile: 10 points, 0.75 to 1.0 mile: 8 points, 0.51 to 0.74 mile: 6 points, 0.26 to 0.50 mile: 4 points, 0.25 mile to less than adjacent: 2 points, Adjacent: 0 points</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Is the land use adjacent to subject site in agricultural or non-agricultural use?</td>
<td>All sides of subject site in agricultural use: 20 points, 15% to 25% of the perimeter in non-agricultural use: 16 points, 26% to 50% of the perimeter in non-agricultural use: 12 points, 51% to 75% of the perimeter in non-agricultural use: 10 points, 76% or more of the perimeter in non-agricultural use: 0 points</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>What size is the subject site?</td>
<td>40 acres or more: 20 points, 30 to 39.9 acres: 16 points, 20 to 29.9 acres: 12 points, 10 to 19.9 acres: 8 points, 5 to 9.9 acres: 4 points, Less than 5 acres: 0 points</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Is the subject site best prime farmland (presently defined as having an LE = 85 or greater)?</td>
<td>Yes: 20 points, No: 0 points</td>
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Draft TOTAL: 200
POSSIBILITIES FOR SITE ASSESSMENT ITEMS

I must apologize for my limited familiarity with the content of your deliberations. I admit to making the mistake of not attending your efforts from the first meeting on. After about 3 years of thinking about LESA, I have undertaken here to provide some alternatives to existing and new items for the RA portion of LESA.

These alternatives still have the goals of preserving farmland and supporting the viability of agriculture but in an expanded way. Note that the "agriculture" I have referenced here has the breadth of practice suggested in the definition of agriculture provided for in the county definition—including row crop, orchard and vegetable production. It also includes a section that allows the justifiability of some conversion and suggests credit to be given to that in those instances. What follows are item by item notations.

ITEMS 1 and 2.
Although there might be an argument to avoid items that are not universal in application, I suggest that drainage is a significant infrastructure feature of the county. Historically, it is the development effort that has made the county habitable and the land farmable. Although mapped records of all tile may not be complete, the known systems are still significant and can be supplemented though oral inquiry and examination of tile entry points in drainage ditches.

I submit that ignoring the tile-ditch systems is unconscionable as they are vital to the agricultural land not only of the property owner but also of neighbors. I personally am aware of several instances where constructions have interdicted systems without repairs and have consequently allowed ponding that have inhibited spring planting. On my own property, I have two tile collapses on my house lot that now allow low spots to hold rain water longer than the fields near by even though the surface drainage now goes into a pond.

We should not ignore what we do know and can learn of the drainage systems in place. If knowledge is not available or constructible in a probable manner, the item simply will not result in a scorable result.

ITEM 3.
Multiple storage locations can facilitate harvest. Relocations or new facilities are costly.

ITEM 4.
I have argued this point without avail in a number of county forum. When a conversion results in a low number of increased daily trips, it does not mean that it is a negligible event. The total cumulative traffic is a matter of concern. Indeed, the upgrading of township roads may seem to make it feasible to allow increasing traffic loads, but there are counter considerations to make. It should be understood that grain truck traffic is year round; that on site sales for orchards or community based agriculture are season long and that traffic is not accounted for in daily estimates; that large sized production equipment that takes up a considerable portion of rural road widths are more and more common and travel farther and farther during planting and harvest seasons. In the past such equipment easily pulled off the feathered edges of roads to allow traffic to pass, but in many places road improvements have created drop offs from the road to the shoulder and where the roads have been widened the drop-offs include the depth of the roadside ditch as hazard for equipment and cars alike.
ITEM 5.
This format uses a common stem for a prompt leading to a number of different considerations. It could be turned into 3 separate items, but there is the underlying connection of impact on viability of agriculture.

ITEM 6.
I have included this item to suggest that the actual productivity of a site would be an appropriate consideration rather than a presumed productivity that serves as the basis of soil classification.

ITEMS 7, 8, 9, and 10.
These items are included as a way to consider conversions that might be justifiable and to give them weight by deduction of points that simply support the preservation of land. (I hesitate to do this as I am usually opposed to conversion.) Yet, there may be justifications that are possible.

Item 7 suggests that conversions for uses such as harvest storage, agricultural chemical depots, and so on are possibly supportive of row crop agriculture while other uses might support the viability of truck farm efforts.

Item 8 supports agriculture by allowing the emphasis tangent and contiguous conversions while not giving credit to conversions that are simply close by. Farm towns used to be a familiar concept where fields came right up the the edge of towns.

Item 9 suggests that conversions should not take place unless the amenities of water and sewerage are immediately available. To suggest that those connections are close is not sufficient, as fiscal and engineering constraints could impede actual connections.

Item 10 allows an argument for conversion for a necessity, although I have difficulty in conceiving of a necessity that supersedes food.
I suggest the addition of a number of items that will deal with the consequences of conversion as a negative factor in protection and viability.

AGRICULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

1) Does the proposed site contain known field tile system or drainage ditch?
   Yes... 5 points
   No.... 0 points

2) Does the surrounding tangent land contain known field tile or drainage ditch?
   Yes... 5 points
   No.... 0 points

3) Does the proposed site contain agricultural harvest storage?
   Yes... 5 points
   No.... 0 points

4) Will the proposed site contribute additional traffic between the site and local point of harvest sale sites for farms?
   Yes, significant daily increase..(as measured by XX)... 5 points.
   No significant daily increase... 0 points.

AGRICULTURAL CONTEXT

5) Will the conversion of the site...
   a) increase the likelihood of future proximate or similar conversions?
   b) reduce future farming practice options (adding livestock..implementing organic methods)?
   c) reduce viability of on-site sales?
   Yes... 5 points each
   No... 0 points
6) If the soils of the site are not classified as prime does the actual productivity of the site compare within 5% with nearest prime soil productivity for 10 years?
Yes...10 points
No... 0 points
Within 10% for 10 years?
Yes...5 points
No... 0 points

I suggest the addition of a number of items that will deal with the consequences of conversion as a neutral or beneficial factor in protection and viability.

CONVERSION ATTRIBUTE

7) Is the proposed conversion supportive of the agricultural nature of the remaining surrounding lands?
Yes...negative 5 points
No.... 0 points

8) Is the site proposed for conversion contiguous to a municipality/village?
Yes...negative 5 points
No.... 0 points

9) Does the site have immediate connection to municipal/village sewer and water?
Yes...negative 5 points
No... 0 points

10) Is the proposed conversion a necessary benefit for the county at large?
Yes...negative 5 points
No.... 0 points