MINUTES AS APPROVED

Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Update Committee

DATE: Wednesday, October 12, 2011
TIME: 6:30 p.m.
PLACE: Brookens Administrative Center
        John Dimit Conference Room
        1776 E. Washington St.
        Urbana, Illinois

Voting Members Present: Kevin Donoho, Debra Griest, Liz Jones, Kyle Krapf, Steve Moser, Bruce Stikkers

Voting Members Absent: Pattsi Petrie, Steve Stierwalt

Non-Voting Member Present: John Hall

Others Present: Norman Stenzel; Andrew Kass

CCRPC Facilitator: Susan Monte

Call to Order and Roll Call

Griest called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m. Donoho, Griest, Jones, Krapf, Moser, Stikkers and Hall were present at the time of roll call, establishing the presence of a quorum.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Donoho to approve the agenda; seconded by Krapf. Motion carried with unanimous support.

Public Participation

Norman Stenzel, 545A CR 1900 N, Champaign, expressed his concerns that the Committee has no systematic way of looking at alternatives, which he believes are worthwhile to consider as the Committee reflects on what it is doing. Stenzel said that change for the sake of change is not necessary either—that there are some things that have worked in the past. Stenzel said that the LESA should be as simple and straightforward as possible, such as various alternatives that were proposed and he urged members to consider these as they move forward.

Griest asked Stenzel what, in his view, is the primary use of the LESA scoring system. Stenzel said the legal basis is that it should be designed to preserve farmland and to help assure the viability of the professional farmer. It seems to him the Committee is focused too much on simply row crop agriculture and that there are other versions of agriculture that can use small bits of land, for example. The 30 or 40-acre standard isn’t necessarily appropriate with respect to other crops, for example miscanthus, which can grow in some
very marginal places, on less than prime farmland. Griest asked whether it is his opinion that LESA is the
only or primary tool for farmland protection, or is it one piece of many tools for farmland protection. Stenzel
said whether it is one or one of many is up to the system the County puts in place. If it is the sole program
for the protection of farmland, it may lose strength and potency and could be discounted and set aside.
If there are other components, it needs to fit in and receive appropriate weighting consideration, which up
to now it has not.

Andrew Kass, Associate Planner with the Champaign County Department of Planning and Zoning, introduced
himself.

Approval of Minutes

Griest requested staff review a list of editorial corrections and some re-wording to the draft minutes for the
September 7, 2011 meeting. Hall said that on page 3, lines 13 and 14 he noticed a missing portion of text.

Land Evaluation Update

Monte reviewed information regarding how the County assesses farmland, as described in the meeting
packet, and explained the data used in each of the four different proposed options for calculating land
evaluation. She reviewed the comparison of the four land evaluation options on four test sites.

Members discussed their impressions of each of the options. Moser reviewed various soil series placements
in the agriculture value groups of the proposed Option 1 based on Bulletin 810. Members discussed
timberland soils. Members discussed the presence of drainage tile as a potential SA factor. Hall shared
observations regarding the distribution of the average relative LE values for the agricultural value groups of
each option. Griest observed that the LE score ideally would be both dramatic and protect the best soils.
Hall said Option 4 rates Kendall, Ashkum, or Sabina soils are rated lower than the first three options and that
is meaningful to him, based on feedback he has received from landowners over the years. Moser observed
that the slope of a soils series is a key input in assessing farmland.

Members discussed selecting the option that is most understandable to the general public.

Hall said that some of the factors considered by the Assessor’s office such as considering wooded areas as
wasteland are not consistent with the County’s land use policies. Members compared the placement of the
Sawmill soils series in the four options. Donoho observed that Sawmill will likely not be developed and
questioned whether it deserved a higher LE relative value as shown in Option 1; in other words, that Sawmill
is a soil that needs less protection to remain as it is. Members considered that development proposals will
occur even in areas that are flood prone. Griest recalled zoning cases where mitigation measures were
proposed to allow for development in floodplain areas, and noted that the higher the protection for a soil
like Sawmill, then that may serve to discourage development in the floodplain.

Members compared the agricultural value groups of the existing LESA and the proposed four options. Monte
explained that Attachment D details the composition of each agricultural value group.

Hall said differences between Drummer and Flanagan are significant and Option 4 captures that. He noticed
that, in Option 4, Dana 56B and Dana 56B2 fall within different agriculture value groups. Donoho talked
about soil lines as not absolute and continuously changing, and that prior management is generally highly
related to soil erosion. Members discussed timber ground areas that are eroded.

Members reviewed how the LE score of a particular parcel is determined.
Griest suggested that a group of members consider a recommendation for an LE option with justification to bring back to our next meeting. Monte and Donoho volunteered to work toward an LE option to recommend to the Committee.

Site Assessment Factors Update

Griest mentioned that Petrie emailed comments earlier in the day which will be considered under this agenda item. Monte provided an overview of the adjustments made to the eleven site assessment factors based on discussion at the September 7 meeting. Draft site assessment factor 1 now shows a 1-mile distance. Draft site assessment factor 2 was carried forward, keeping the proposed measurement of perimeter length. Monte said that the five consecutive years of USDA NRCS NAIP digital ortho photos will be available for a review of the draft site assessment factor 3, and that no adjustments to this factor are yet proposed. Monte said the CCGIS Consortium will make the USDA NRCS NAIP digital ortho photos available to County staff and will explore the possibility of placing the digital ortho photos online, provided the space exists on their server. Monte said that draft site assessment factor 4 now includes the CR zoning district, in addition to the AG-1 and AG-2 zoning districts, as discussed. Griest noted that this will include the rural residential overlay districts (RRO’s) that the County has approved. Monte noted no changes to draft site assessment factor 5. Monte noted that draft site assessment factor 6 has been adjusted to include the possibility of connection to existing public sanitary sewer systems of smaller communities to a parcel located at the edge of those communities. These smaller communities that are outside of the LRMP’s Contiguous Urban Growth Area (CUGA) include communities such as Fisher, Thomasboro, Tolono. The parcel would have to be within 200 feet of an existing public sanitary sewer system, otherwise the connection would not be considered as practically available.

Monte described the revisions to draft site assessment factor 7, made to clarify two levels of livestock management facility: those with 400 animal units or more, and those with less than 400 animal units.

Hall noted his concern that parts a and b of draft site assessment factor 7 need to be mutually exclusive, and members discussed their interpretation of this factor and how it is proposed to be scored. Jones observed that if two livestock management facilities were present within a one mile distance from a subject site, that there could be potential for more points than 10. Griest suggested converting this factor to a single question with three levels. Krapf noted it would be important to retain the distance component of this factor. Members requested that the wording of this factor be adjusted to limit the number of points to only 10.

Monte said no revisions have been made to draft site assessment factor 8, based on the September 7 review of site assessment factors, and discussed the significance of a public assembly of 50 or more versus a public assembly of 1,000, for example. Members considered that somewhat larger public assembly threshold would allow for the smaller churches that exist in the rural areas. Griest suggested 200 as a public assembly number to use for this factor.

Stikkers described possibly adding site assessment factors that assess existing agricultural infrastructure, such as 1) drainage improvements, 2) on-site storage such as grain bins, barns, and sheds; or 3) proximity to local point of harvest sale for a farm. Members discussed the drainage improvements suggestion, and how such a factor could be weighted, and how modern drainage could be defined. For example, a patterned tile system would receive more points than a clay tile line. Members considered that the on-site storage would not be a consistent value.

Monte provided an overview of the concern’s stated in Petrie’s email. Monte said that Petrie stressed the importance of field testing the draft version and indicated her intention to additionally field test one or more alternative versions of a draft LESA. Members discussed their decision early on to include draft site
assessment factors that relate to agriculture and that the alternatives mentioned are counter to that approach. Monte said the Committee will be involved in field testing and that this will be described in more detail at the next Committee meeting.

Griest said the Committee should try to have a final draft before the end of November. She suggested that an objective for the next meeting should be that we have a draft that is ready for field testing.

Next Meeting Date
Members agreed to hold the next Committee meeting on Wednesday, November 2, at 6:30 p.m.

Adjournment
Griest adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Monte, LESA Update Committee Facilitator