

Carroll County Lands and Annex Subcommittee

Date: February 2 2024
Location: Carroll County Annex
Time: 2:00 pm
Present: Subcommittee Chairman Mark McConkey
Representative Richard Brown
Representative David Paige
Commissioner Bill Nelson
Commissioner Chuck McGee
Mellisa Seamans, Executive Coordinator
Public: Dallas Emery
Joy Gagnon – UNH Cooperative Extension

MOTION: Approve December 12 2023 meeting minutes by Rep. Paige, 2nd Rep. Brown. Passed 3-0

Rep. Paige: Conversation with Jen Stillwell MWV Housing Coalition wants to use the County property for their annual charrette; this could begin the public input process. We need to be really careful in framing the event that it is the beginning of the conversation. Potential for a daycare facility constructed using grant funding, owned by the County and leased to a provider. The other project is some kind of workforce housing project. We have been talking about the need to have a really robust public input process. The board met with MWV Housing Coalition who will help facilitate the community outreach project.

Rep. Brown: We formed the committee at the request from the previous board of commissioners. We toured facilities, housing developments. Looking at some sort of trial phase, constructing small homes, to see how it would work for the County, trying to make those available to County employees first. A group came to us asking for support for childcare through a grant process.

Rep. McConkey: We are not interested in accepting federal money that will limit who can live in the housing. acres of land that could support childcare and housing with continued farming and forestry. The portion we would look at for childcare would not be prime farmland. Same with housing. There is a great shortfall of childcare in the State.

Rep. Paige: Most centers have a 40+ waiting list which means parents not in the workforce. Ultimately it is up to the Commissioners what use of land moves forward.

Rep. Brown: Thank you to Comm'r Nelson for being involved. Next will be feedback from the citizens.

Rep. McConkey: Hoop house out there we are not using. Inmates no longer "work the farm". We are putting together mapping of forest lands, prime agriculture, adding in the hoop house and farming information. What is the interest in the citizenry in using the land?

Comm'r McGee: How much workforce housing would it take to meet the need?

Rep. McConkey: Lakes Region Planning Commission released a study; hundreds and hundreds of units are needed in Carroll County.

Rep. Paige: Right now in the State of NH there are more people out of the workforce because they can't find childcare than there are unemployed people

Rep. McConkey: Statistic I heard is that for every one child in childcare, there are three others on a waiting list. It is our understanding that our water system at the County is maxed out. Any development is going to require more infrastructure.

Conversation with NH Agriculture Commissioner Shawn Jasper who is looking into available grant funding.

Comm'r Nelson: Any idea what a private well will cost?

Rep. McConkey: \$12,000-\$20,000

Rep. Brown: Suggest having a meeting with Wendy Scribner in attendance with maps

Rep. Paige: CDFA Community Development Planning Grants (\$25,000). Childcare is a priority. Recommend that the Commissioners move forward with it. My recommendation is we use it for a needs assessment and feasibility study for childcare project. Connect with project in Plymouth that used CDBG money to build a center. There is a lot of money for construction; congressionally directed spending; I think we could do the whole project with grant funding.

Rep. McConkey: We know the study will find a need. No repayment if the County chooses not to move forward.

D Emery: I am not in favor of federal funding. What we have been doing is not working.

Rep. Paige: The reality is that someone is going to get that money. It's either coming here to do our project or going to somewhere else.

Rep. McConkey: Like Comm'r Nelson, this is the third time I've been through this farm conversation and we're tired of it.

Rep. Paige: The key to the success of a childcare center is who we partner with, sustainable. I have heard from four providers expressing interest.

Wendy Scribner joins the meeting.

W Scribner: Work continues taking data from 2006 forest management plan and transcribe those features onto the digital mapping we do now.

Interested in doing workshops re: invasive plants on the County land

Rep. Paige: Happy to attend a Commissioners' meeting to discuss the CDFA planning grant.

Comm'r McGee: What happened with the last farm committee

Rep. McConkey: It was a tremendous effort. Discussed opening more trial networks. We looked at how to make our property more attractive to potential farmers. Then everything just stopped.

J Gagnon: Presented the results of the food access survey. (Attached to the minutes for the record)

Rep. Paige: What kind of model is feasible? If this became an incubator what happens when some idealistic 23-year-old comes in, wants to be a farmer and then in two years is just in debt? Supporting local food and getting more nutritious food in the hands of people is a goal worthwhile but the business itself is so difficult. I love the idea of leveraging our public land but is it enough?

D Emery: Suggest the guarantee that the farmer can sell their produce to the nursing home, jail...

Rep. McConkey: The County Farm used to supply the nursing home but the crop didn't match the need. Better coordination is necessary

J Gagnon: Is there a way to process the food – commercial kitchen

Rep. McConkey: We have barns, a surplus of farming equipment. I think if we think in a big enough vision we could get there by next year – the hoop house, the tractors

D Emery Suggest USDA in Conway could have a satellite office at Carroll County so producers would have access to their inspection services onsite

Rep. McConkey: Request SNAP work with convenience stores to increase food access; assist store owners with the onerous process to accept SNAP. The owners can comply with the requirements but the application process is difficult

J Gagnon I like the idea of having the food hub here, process in the kitchen for distribution, maybe dining here?

Rep. McConkey can also look at County's Route 28 property – more visible

Action

- Survey of County Employees – childcare/housing
- Digitized maps available on the County website
- Commissioners' approval CDFA planning grant

Minutes approved on _____

Rep. Mark McConkey, Committee Chairman