

Town of Dunn
Farmer Focus Group
October 14, 2003 10:00-11:30

Question 1: What are **up to 3** things you would like to see in Dunn and 3 things you don't want to see (record on flip charts). [Ask leading question, why is that important to you? how come? Etc.]

- Like about Town of Dunn:
 - County Highways and current access to highways is good
 - Its close proximity to the city, but it's still rural
 - Efforts of Town to preserve farming
 - Neighbors usually are farmers
 - Town supported farmer in zoning issue with the county, thankful for that
 - Like that to get a split must have 35 acres, but the split for the house cannot be more than 2 acres. You don't have to buy 35 acres to buy one house, that would be wasteful.
 - Town of Vienna basically said that unless you're involved in farming operation you won't put up a house in the Town. They are not under as much growth pressure. They don't have much of a tax base because mostly farmland
 - Need to accommodate some city folks
- Don't like/want to see in Dunn
 - A new highway. It would be inconvenient for farmers to cross and increased traffic would be a problem
 - Land prices are high, hard for new farmers to get in
 - Some new houses being put up are splitting up fields; this has been getting better though; you have to realize there's going to be a certain amount of growth
 - Location of some new houses are affecting stormwater runoff and runoff from fields affects new homes down
 - Nuisance of city people coming out and not understanding farming and its practices
 - City people trespass with their "toys", ATVs run over fields
 - Trash and tires littered in roadside ditches

Question 2: Are you aware of the PDR program? How do you think this affects the quality of life in the town? How important is this program to you? Is it worth this much of your tax bill? How come?

- "For me personally, not important. I have agland and I'm never going to develop it"; "To me it seems kind of artificial, the whole idea, taking money from one place to another"
- Looking at how close we are to urban development pressure, it's very important to have it as a tool. "We are not in a position to drive the land

values as we did 20 years ago from an agricultural standpoint. It's other uses that are driving prices" "Its very important here in the Town of Dunn to maintain a agricultural base"

- "What I like is it locks that land into ag forever", "Forever's a long time", "You say it's a long time, but if you pour a bypass out there, I doubt that it will ever go back into agriculture production again. Why isn't the ability to produce food forever"
- "There's some land that's just as well off for house site- woodlots, hillsides"
- "We can't shut the odors down at the fence lot", more neighbors mean more problems for farming
- Woodlands make good agricultural land for mushroom cultivation.
- If you as a farmer split your land apart in your will, Land Use Plan can't stop that, so the PDR does serve a purpose
- I have 70 neighbors on the northside of my farm- trash, destroyed fence, vandalism problems, complain about farm machinery being visible. "you spend most of the time trying to keep your head above water, makes you not focus too much on the neighbor problems"
- I have not seen the amounts that have been paid for what lands, would be nice to see.
- Our son plans to continue farming after we're gone. We have entered part of our land into the program for the primary reason that we don't want the nuisance of dealing with the city people. Around the buildings at least, we don't want people coming in any closer than they already are. "There's enough leeway in the program, we feel like we're not strapped as completely as you might think the program does"
- "It was a big shot in the arm as far as reducing debt, at our age, it was a good debt reliever, so we feel it helped us out a good deal at that time"
- The Town reassured us that at some point it may have to be retracted 100 or 200 years down the road if things change. It's good to have the wildlife we've got, they need space to- the PDR program helps with that.
- If farms lose their preferential tax treatment, that will break a lot of farms really fast. There's an importance for PDR for that situation.
- I have not seen a reduction in taxes since entering PDR. I think assessors need to be reminded what land is in PDR.
- Bankers still see their value in the land- pretty high for farmland
- The quicker you move the better because land values are increasing in Dane County, but it's hard to have all the funding.
- Agriculture is important enough that we want to keep a base of it here
- "I don't know anything about it, I'm just anti-government. It seems a little socialistic to me". "As an area gets more populated, we need more regulations. I guess we're not nearly as regulated as Europe"- or the Eastern US.
- "I don't have as much problem with the government being involved as long as they don't try to control my day to day actions" I don't want to be restricted about when I can or can't spread manure, or run my tractor.

- Has the Town done much to encourage more new farmers to move to this area? Average age of a farmer is around 60- what happens when you preserve farmland and there's no farmers. You'll just see city people moving out and putting up mansions on 50 acres and then a farmer will never be able to afford that land again.

Question 3: Think about the challenges your business faces. How could the Town help your business OR encourage/maintain agriculture in Dunn. Or if you feel comfortable please share the challenge.

- Sauk Co. has compiled a list of farmers and what they sell to increase rural tourism.
- Pork and Beef must be state inspected before we can sell it to consumers. We don't have a lot of locations to take the pigs to get them into a more usable form to sell to consumers. There are not many butchering facilities. That's why we run our trucks to Iowa. Since I'm at least 50 miles each way, every week, to the processor, the farmers closer have the advantage because they don't have as high of transportation costs as me. We have commodity and niche market farming and they both have unique needs. Us being 6 miles from the capital we're at a disadvantage because we're so far from processing facilities.
- 'Shut the neighbors up when they complain'.
- Prices are our biggest problem, I don't know how much the Town can do to help our prices, to keep us going.
- Transporting equipment on highways can be a problem. We need brush cleared off the side of the road so we can pull over to get out of the way. Issue at all times of the year. Would like the public to be more educated about how to behave when following or passing farm equipment. It's a safety issue for cars and bikes.
- Snow machines, horses and foot traffic are a problem on property. If I called the sheriff every time this was an issue, he'd be out 2 or 3 times a week. City people don't respect private property. Crops get trampled, 4 wheeling through at night, small trees taken out, trespassers took out my whole mushroom crop. I'm forced to build what should be unnecessary fences.
- 'Easy to grow it, hard to sell it'. Finding markets is a challenge. I'll be looking to rent more land soon and I know more people that want to rent more land. Unfortunately, we have to rent because we're not in a position to buy because the land prices are too high. I wouldn't mind buying a place in this area because it's so close to market, especially with gas prices always going up. The other option is going southwest, but that's an hour each way. "Too much time in the vehicle, I'd rather be working on the farm."
- Biggest challenge for me was when the road went in I had trouble getting my cows from one side to the other, it was an inconvenience and a safety issue. The Town put an underpass in and that was wonderful.
- Those of us in commodity market are looking for ways to grow and intensify.
- We're looking to grow a business that will provide for our next generation.

- How about a Town of Dunn collective direct sales farm market to the city of Madison. bring out our meat, vegetables and milk.
- We all bring our stuff into Madison, maybe they'd come out here.
- There used to be a store at the end of Hwy B. Maybe we could have a store or farmstand.

Question 4: Close out question - Go around the room. What is the one thing you would like to say to the Town about this 20 year planning process.

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