



**Champaign County Board
Environment and Land Use Committee (ELUC)
County of Champaign, Urbana, Illinois**

MINUTES – Approved as Distributed – 3/7/13

DATE: Thursday, February 7, 2013
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
PLACE: Lyle Shields Meeting Room
Brookens Administrative Center
1776 E Washington, Urbana, IL 61802

Committee Members

Present	Absent
Ralph Langenheim (Chair)	
Aaron Esry (Vice Chair)	
Astrid Bergson	
Stan Harper	
Alan Kurtz	
Pattsi Petrie	
Jon Schroeder	

County Staff: John Hall (Director of Planning & Zoning), Deb Busey (County Administrator), Susan Monte (Planner - Ch Co Regional Planning Commission), Beth Brunk (Recording Secretary)

Others Present: Michael Richards, John Jay (Champaign Co Board), Brad Uken (Champaign Co Farm Bureau), Dr. Derek Winstanley (former Chief of Illinois State Water Survey)

MINUTES

I. Call to Order

Committee Chair Langenheim called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

II. Roll Call

A verbal roll call was taken and a quorum was declared present.

III. Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Ms. Petrie to approve the agenda as distributed; seconded by Mr. Kurtz. Upon vote, **the MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

IV. Public Participation

None

V. Communications

None

VI. Consideration/Approval by ELUC Committee (to allow 30 days for public review then final document is brought back to ELUC for approval)

A. Draft – Minor Amendments to Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP)

Susan Monte introduced the document as the annual update of the County's LRMP. Of the four suggested amendments, #4 concerns recently available maps of prime natural recharge areas for the Mahomet Aquifer in Champaign County.

Brad Uken, manager at Champaign County Farm Bureau, is active in the Regional Water Supply Planning Committee (RWSPC). He spoke to the Committee about the Mahomet Aquifer which is a limited natural resource. Mr. Uken dispelled two common myths about the Mahomet Aquifer: 1) it does not flow from West Virginia – the water comes from recharge in this area, and 2) it is not a flowing river underground – it moves approximately 6 inches per year. The Mahomet aquifer touches 15 counties – from Watseka in the north, moves south through Paxton and Rantoul, goes around Champaign-Urbana to Monticello then into the Illinois River. Water composition in east-central Illinois comes from surface water (22%), shallow aquifers (10%) and the Mahomet Aquifer (68%).

In 2007, former Governor Blagojevich created the RWSPC with funding for three years that was ultimately cut to two. The Committee works closely with the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium. The overall goal of the RWSPC was to examine the supply of the Mahomet Aquifer, determine demand and develop a management plan. The Committee also looked at those communities that depend on surface water – Bloomington, Decatur, Danville and Springfield – and suggested the development of current drought preparedness plans. The final RWSPC report from 2009 called for these items: additional stakeholder involvement, education, plans for aquifer management on a regional level and voluntary programs.

Since 2009, Mr. Uken described the activities of the RWSPC which have included public outreach, development of a sample drought preparedness plan, identification/examination of recharge areas, discussions on water-related issues affecting the aquifer and solicitation of funding from private and public sectors to update the 2009 RWSPC report by June 2014.

Mr. Uken highlighted three prime natural recharge areas for the Mahomet Aquifer in and nearby Champaign County based on current assumptions and the best available data: south/east of Rantoul, north/west of Rantoul and north of Penfield in the Middle Fork River Forest Preserve. Additionally, a small area in the Mahomet has some unusual characteristics but it is questionable to describe it as a natural recharge area.

The Water Management subcommittee of the RWSPC is developing a white paper to facilitate an understanding of what recharge means and options for protection. It is currently being revised with a final document to be approved at the end of March 2013. It will be open to the public and posted on the RWSPC website. Stakeholders are being contacted who own land, live or farm in the recharge areas to discuss and educate about possible protection options.

Mr. Kurtz asked if the white paper will prioritize the areas with the fastest recharge rate. Mr. Uken responded that the document will identify these areas in broad terms of aquifer protection or management. Mr. Harper wanted to know what protection means. Mr. Uken stated that the white paper will provide examples of what is being done around the country. These examples may or may not be applicable to east central Illinois. There are no specifics yet but all the stakeholders such as the landowners, citizens and environmentalists need to work together to determine the level of protection if any.

Ms. Monte pointed out that the County's LRMP includes a natural resources goal with an objective about groundwater quality and availability. LRMP Policy 8.14 states, "to the extent that distinct recharge areas are identified for any aquifers, the County will work to prevent development in such areas that would significantly impair recharge to the aquifers." The priority item reads, "monitor progress towards identification and mapping of distinct recharge areas in and adjacent

to Champaign County. In the event that such areas are identified, amend relevant County ordinances to prevent development of such areas.”

Ms. Petrie inquired if future generations are being considered in the wording of the white paper. Dr. Winstanley indicated that the document is clearly geared to protecting sustainable use of water in the region by providing adequate supply of clean water for all future generations. Ms. Petrie noted that there were informational gaps on the Mahomet Aquifer Consortium (MAC) website. She asked if the map of the recharge areas would be posted on MAC’s website. Mr. Uken said that the map from Dr. Roadcap will be included in the white paper. Ms. Petrie wondered if RWSPC had considered posting the draft white paper on the website so the public can begin reading it with the ability to add comments. Mr. Uken commented that the white paper is still being revised, and RWSPC would like to get the document as correct as possible before releasing it to the public. Comments will be allowed by the public at that time.

Mr. Schroeder speculated that the quick recharge areas located in Champaign County Forest Preserve land in Penfield and Mahomet are connected with sand veins.

Ms. Berkson joined the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Uken stated that there is no question that the geology of the soil plays a role in recharge. Dr. Winstanley explained that the recharge areas on the maps outlined in red are sandy soil types. The complexity arises in understanding what happens to the water as it infiltrates the soil in these sandy areas and how it recharges the Mahomet Aquifer below. The geology is incredibly complicated.

Mr. Langenheim had a general inquiry about the specific actions taken to protect the recharge areas in the country. Dr. Winstanley commented that efforts are primarily focused on water quality/prevention of pollution. The recharge areas are the most vulnerable for water quality degradation. The western end of the Mahomet Aquifer (Mason, Tazwell, Gifford, Peoria counties) has been designated a protected recharge area under the Illinois Clean Water Act. The Central Region Groundwater Protection Committee (CRGPC) have focused on pollution prevention through education to protect the recharge areas, promotion to seal of abandoned wells and ordinances to prevent pollution by chemical plants. In Champaign County with these newly identified recharge areas, consideration should be given to both water quality and quantity.

Mr. Schroeder asked if there was a funding mechanism for the CRGPC. Dr. Winstanley replied that limited funding comes from IEPA but it is mostly volunteer-based. Mr. Schroeder inquired what process could be used to determine a safe withdrawn level from the aquifer. Dr. Winstanley replied that model simulation is used to gauge withdrawal effect. Currently, Illinois American Water in western Champaign draws down 21 million gallons/day. Total water withdrawals in Champaign County are approximately 32-34 million gallons/day. This withdrawal creates a cone of depression drawing down water levels in wells within the aquifer. This cumulative withdrawal affects all of Champaign County.

Mr. Kurtz asked how the Farm Bureau may view protection of the aquifer recharge areas – private property rights versus public concerns for the safety of the aquifer. Mr. Uken reiterated that all stakeholders must be involved and a balance needs to be discussed. There are no concrete answers at this time.

Ms. Petrie wondered if the white paper will incorporate options offered by other communities to reduce water use like incentives to replace toilets with low-flow models. Mr. Uken answered that the white paper will be concentrating on the recharge areas and will not include those water conservation options. However, water conservation is a key aspect that the RWSPC Water Management Subcommittee will be addressing later including the use of greywater.

Mr. Harper asked if there had been repercussions in areas like Nebraska who have irrigated for years. Mr. Uken replied that some areas in the west have dewatered aquifers from overuse. Mr. Langenheim inquired if additional wells would be drilled for testing. Mr. Uken stressed that further advanced studies to research the aquifer require time and money. The Mahomet Aquifer Consortium and RWSPC encourage others to do the appropriate planning and research but do not conduct research themselves. It would be up to the Water Survey and Geological Survey to drill more wells. MAC and RWSPC are encouraging the respective surveys to come up with a combined research agenda on what needs to be done to fill the information gaps that exist.

Ms. Monte suggested that updating the LRMP concerning prime natural recharge areas of the Mahomet Aquifer (#4 Amendment) should be deferred until the white paper have been released. She also explained the other three LRMP amendments. This document would be open to public review for 30 days.

MOTION by Mr. Kurtz to accept and place on file the minor amendments #1-#3 to the LRMP as presented; seconded by Ms. Petrie. Upon vote, **the MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

VII. Provided for Information Only

A. Mahomet Aquifer Consortium (MAC) seeks Financial Support from Partners

Mr. Uken stated that the MAC is seeking voluntary funds from various communities, counties and organizations throughout the 15-county region. The money will provide an update to the the 2009 RWSPC report and various educational outreach programs on the aquifer. Mr. Uken is hopeful that the Champaign County Board will contribute to the MAC especially after the discussion on the importance of newly identified aquifer recharge areas in Champaign County.

Ms. Petrie explained that she supports the protection of the aquifer but found that the MAC website had no details on how the approximately \$70,000 in fundraising had been spent. Dr. Winstanley agreed that it is important to describe how the money is spent. In addition to the website, MAC sends a quarterly newsletter to those on the mailing list.

B. Annual Update: Land Resource Management Conditions within the County

Ms. Monte detailed the 2013 annual update which is a summary of ongoing trends or new development relevant to Champaign County land resource and management conditions including:

- Update County Floodplain maps by Illinois State Water Survey
- Champaign Urbana Urbanized Area Transportation Study (CUUATS) update of the Long Range Transportation Plan 2040
- Model Water Restriction Ordinance for Champaign County
- Efforts to Protect the Mahomet Aquifer
- Recycling Efforts for Pharmaceuticals & Household Hazardous Waste
- National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Update

Ms. Petrie commented that CUUATS Technical Committee meetings are not open to the public which is a growing concern to her. Ms. Monte had stated that only existing pharmaceutical collection occurs at Carle Clinic but that program may be ending. Ms. Petrie wanted more details. Ms. Monte explained that the organizer from the Illinois-Indiana Sea Grant Program had expressed that concern, and the funding is from IEPA.

C. IEPA Notice of Application for Permit to Manage Waste for the Landscape Recycling Center

Ms. Monte reported that the City of Urbana is experimenting with composting small-scale vegetable food scraps at the Landscape Recycling Center. This document is the notification to jurisdictions that a permit modification has been requested.

Ms. Petrie is excited about this program and hopes it multiplies throughout other communities in

the county. She noted that this has been mandated in San Francisco since 2009. Mr. Schroeder noted that it has been done locally as well by Illinois State University.

VIII. Monthly Reports

A. November 2012

Mr. Hall mentioned that the monthly reports will be in the packets from now on and not handed out at the meetings. Mr. Schroeder asked if the number of permits has increased. Mr. Hall reported that last fiscal year permit totals were significantly more than the previous two years. Zoning cases have also increased to the point it is hard the Planning & Zoning staff to keep up with them.

Mr. Kurtz noted that there are currently six members of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), and he would like to find a person to bring the Board to seven members. Ms. Petrie wondered if there was a way to adjust the geographic restrictions on ZBA Board members so there could be more elasticity. Mr. Hall stated that the restriction regarding one member from each township is a statutory restriction – it is inflexible. The other rule where members of the Champaign County ZBA must reside in the unincorporated area is not a state restriction but one approved by the Champaign County Board. The latter is the most difficult challenge in finding candidates for the ZBA.

Ms. Petrie wondered if this should be an agenda item for a future ELUC to explore the possibility to put more elasticity into the criteria that the County Board has oversight on. Mr. Schroeder felt that rezoning, variances and special uses mostly affect those in the unincorporated areas. It just takes time to find the right person. Mr. Hall pointed out that along the ZBA has been short a member for almost a year, the attendance is very good and the Board continues to function.

IX. Other Business

None

X. Chair's Report

Mr. Langenheim stated that a formal amendment packet for the LRMP will be on the agenda for next month. In addition, the County's legal department is considering an update of the County's jurisdiction of water.

XI. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Langenheim adjourned the meeting at 7:22 p.m.