

Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee and Staff Meeting Minutes
April 25th, 2007 4:45p.m.
Avon Community Church, Avon

Present: Cliff Borgerding, Mark Conway, Allan Davisson, Peter Dwyer, Steve Plantenberg, and Lowell Rushmeyer. Mike Leedahl the Pastor of Avon Community Church were guests. Melissa Holm and Tom Kroll were present as non-voting staff.

1. Dedication of Schellinger SNA on May 11th at 10am-noon at the site.
Invitations were sent out April 25th to involved individuals, local government officials and local media. The public is also welcome to attend. The SNA is to be named the Avon Hills Forest SNA.
2. Comprehensive Plan Update – Allan Davisson and Steve Plantenberg
More area meetings are to take place first in Avon then in other areas starting May 7th. Density references were removed from the overlay section of the Comp. Plan. Allan felt that now was the perfect time to be working on this project and that government representatives present at comp. plan meetings had enthusiastic responses.
3. Conservation Design Conference on June 28 with Randall Arendt - Tom Kroll
Thus far, Stearns County, the Initiative Foundation and a couple other groups are willing to donate money for the conference. The planning day for the conference will be May 3rd. Allan suggested that Stearns county residents could apply for a special subsidy to make the conference more affordable for local citizens. It was also suggested that some of the donated money could go to buying books for attendees.
4. Initiative Foundation Grant - Tom Kroll
 - The Nature Conservancy provides \$5,000 match
 - Grant to be delivered by May 1 to Initiative Foundation**The money from the Nature Conservancy originally intended to fund the Efrogmson project will now serve as a match for the Initiative Foundation grant. The grant will be good over a two-year period. Melissa will send a copy of the grant and a copy of the existing position description to all committee members. A search committee will be established at the May meeting to fill the position.**
5. Shuman Lake Road – Mark Conway
The group plans to present their ideas to the Collegetown roads committee at one of roads group's monthly meetings this summer, likely in June. Tim Haeg suggested talking to the Collegetown supervisors and indicating the group's commitment to the project in some way. He feels the supervisors will be supportive of the project.
6. Avon Hills Movie - Mark Conway
The current plan for distribution of the video is to work with Twin Cities Public Television as they have a broad, standard distribution network. It will be a 28 minute piece that includes footage in all four seasons. The current plan air date is in October 2007.

7. Next AHI newsletter
 - Out by May 30th
 - Include SNA dedication
 - Collegeville Twp votes for twp tax for environment (right?)
 - June 28th Randall Arendt Conference
 - Comp plan update
 - Avon Hills Movie
 - New Avon Hills position description and offer
 - Definitions of Conservation Overlay District (again?)
 - ????

Melissa will start developing a new Avon Hills Initiative Update newsletter.

8. Meeting with County Board – Tom Kroll
Tom met with the County Board of Commissioners, who reviewed the committee's proposed resolutions. The only change they recommended was to change the endorsement from 'Avon Hills Initiative' to 'Stearns County Board of Commissioners'. Tom changed the wording of the resolution and asked the committee to pass the resolution. Mark Conway moved to accept the resolution and Lowell seconded it. The resolution passed with a majority of 'ayes' and one nay. Attached.

Resolution for Adoption by the Avon Hills Initiative

Property Tax Reform for undeveloped, non-agricultural lands in Minnesota.

WHEREAS the Stearns County Comprehensive Plan calls for protection of open spaces because these lands provide public benefits of clean air, clean water, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty; and

WHEREAS undeveloped lands place a very low demand on public services; and

WHEREAS property taxes on undeveloped lands which exceed the value of the owners economic and non-economic land ownership benefits can induce landowners to sub-divide for development and thereby reduce the desired public benefits; and

WHEREAS the value of open space on undeveloped agricultural land is already recognized through reduced assessments (Green Acres and the 2A Ag lands tax class); and

WHEREAS owners of non-agricultural, undeveloped land do not have any equivalent opportunity; and

WHEREAS The MN Department of Revenue (MN DOR) has recognized this inequity and proposed solutions in their Feb 2006 "Rural Woodlands" report

(www.taxes.state.mn.us/property/other_supporting_content/final_timber-woodlands_report.pdf); and

WHEREAS much of the intent of that report is included within Senate File 1024; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee endorses those specific elements of SF 1024 as shown on the attachment including our suggestions for improvement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee encourages their adoption by the 2007 legislature and the Governor.

Action taken by the Avon Hills Initiative:

Recommended by vote of the Executive Committee:



Peter Dwyer, Chair

25 April 2007