

ILRC August Meeting

8-17-2020

Called to order at 1:03

Katie Nelson opened the meeting and welcomed council members and participants.

- Went over the agenda for the day.
- Roll call- 6 members present at the start of the meeting, which is a quorum.
 - Total Members present:
 - Richard Beck
 - Mayor Thomas Debaun
 - Beth Tharp
 - David Kovich (joined later)
 - Seth Hardin
 - Kara Salazar
 - Jeff Page
- Reviewed the purpose of the council and it's mission- "the purpose of the council is to collect information and provide educational and technical assistance to local governments regarding land use strategies and issues across the state."

Approval of Nov. 2019 minutes

- Richard Beck made a motion to approve minutes
- Beth Tharp seconded the motion
- Minutes were approved by all members- minutes approved by a roll call vote and the following members vote yes to approve the minutes (no nay votes):
 - Richard Beck
 - Mayor Debaun
 - Beth Tharp
 - Seth Hardin
 - Kara Salazar
 - Jeff Page

Quick introduction of members of the public on the call:

Barbara Shae Cox

Jeff Cummins, IN Farm Bureau Policy

Katrina Hall, IN Farm Bureau Policy

Mark Dobbs, Community Planning Liaison for NSA Crane

Judy Lightfoot

Rick Nobbe

Katie- last November we voted to start looking at where we should go from here.

- Wrapped up the guidebook and land use summit.
- Decided for each council member to go back to their constituency and discuss what land use issues should be addressed.

- We took notes and worked with the councilor to determine what needs to be done.
- Original goal was to come up with a direction and a project and to back it up with funds. That is no longer an option with COVID-19 so we will have to get creative.
- Might be an option to host another virtual meeting to discuss next steps.

Richard Beck, County Government

- Asked Katie to make a presentation to the NE Mayors and Commissioners Caucus. They meet on a monthly basis to talk about various issues. They deal with the issues we have commonality on.
- Some of the key points that came up were subdivisions, minimum lot requirements, best practices, spot zoning, comprehensive plans at the county level, land use between agriculture and development, as well as urban agriculture.
- The other thing that was enlightening was that many people did not know the ILRC existed. As they are moving toward updating comprehensive plans they will be looking for some helpful resources.
- One thing that came up was local control over decisions. We are all in sync that we prefer local control vs. the state deciding what happens (especially toward renewable energy).
- It was a positive meeting and we appreciated the opportunity.

Katie- one of the strong points was educating on the ILRC. Has gotten calls since to present on the guidebook and on the council, which is encouraging.

Beth Tharp, Farm Owners

- Met back in early February which was a long time ago. Had a good mix of farm owners and organizations.
- Most of them were familiar with the ILRC and was appreciative of feedback.
- Key takeaways resulted from a lot of people who know the issues well.
- Part of the discussion was on comprehensive plan reviews- counties are taking different approaches to it. Good opportunity for the ILRC to provide assistance.
- Local overreach vs. state statute continues to be an issue in this area.
- Counties would like assistance defending land-use decisions regarding renewables and strategic communication of ILRC's work and findings would be helpful, and potentially leveraging local relationships with the county to make sure they know of available resources.

Katie- you can already see there was some overlap which is very interesting

David Kovich, Home Builders and Development

Katie- we met with David's group recently.

- We discussed the difference between sustainability and resiliency, as well as the 500-year flood plain and planning for the future, as well as creating form-based codes that are more architecturally driven
- In addition, we talked about implementing filter strips along county regulated open ditches, assistance with drainage as it creates a major limit on development, as well as educating developers to be more familiar with the land use plan.
- Hopefully David will be joining the call later to add any of his thoughts as well.

Environment, Seth Harden

- Met with constituency and had a good cross-section of people in the group.
- Everyone has their own priorities and ideas. Meeting spanned a lot of different ideas.
- People were impressed with the guidebook and we came up with ideas for going forward.
- We talked about renewable energy and natural habitat verses mitigation, quality of place and maintaining the values that make our state great
- Talked about water and drainage which was a common theme, green vs. gray infrastructure and the economic cases, as well as ensuring farmers are aware of programs for private land.
- One other thing I wanted to mention was climate change resilience adaptation. Working to forecast what can be done in the future.

Katie- do you mind mentioning the pollinator-friendly solar discussion?

Seth- have had calls with Rob Davis regarding integrating pollinators into development. Has worked with counties across the state to advocate for pollinator-friendly solar. Rather than mowing in between solar panels, we should plant pollinator-friendly grasses and wildflowers to make it productive.

Kara Salazar, Academia

- Our meeting was a little bit of a hybrid. Held our meeting with our quarterly Purdue Land Use Team meeting with our advisory board. Had some rich discussion.
- Talked about how to continue to leverage the guidebook that was developed. Continue to use it in community planning opportunities, as well as social media.
- Focus on land development, as well as educating officials, discussed growth vs. development and how to leverage the two different goals.
- Talked a little about what types of education formats could take place.
- Population density.
- There have been several projects going on to have additional guidance with solar and pollinators. Information should be coming out soon.
- Recently launched an online learning opportunity. Doing more around the education piece of land use planning.
- One thing next year will be a climate and renewable energy planning project- will renew all the codes and ordinances in Indiana. Will have additional education come out of that.
- Planning on some environmental topics and public engagement topics.

Jeff Healy, SWCDs

- Katie gave an overview of the meeting- it was done toward the beginning of the year
- Talked a lot about solar and floodwater storage on sites.
- Talked about pollinator-friendly solar habitats, assistance with local government on land use and zoning
- They would like the ILRC to assist if ever needed, talked about nutrient-laden run-off and best practices, focus on plan commissions being proactive rather than reactive
- Focused on education on home rule as well as educating the non-farming public.

Jeff Page, Forestry

- Had a good representation at our meeting.
- What surfaced were three main components- invasive species, composition of forests and water qualities and tree planting.
- There is a lot of overlap between constituencies- specifically between utility easements and invasive species.
- Invasive species are now in our forest and are a never-ending battle. It's not just treating the invasive species, but we are also missing some habitat opportunity.
- We feel like we would like to see collaboration to urge people to use native species in development.
- Composition of forests- lack of young forest is a big topic. Our forests are some of the most quality wood, but they are aging. It is not healthy for the environment- we need H class diversity and a diversity of habitat.
- Loss of oak hickory is a big deal as well. We talked about prescribed fire and newer advanced forestry habits that are truly needed to diversify woods.
- Saw a lot of overlap with The Nature Conservancy.
- Water quality reforestation efforts and NRCS farm bill type programming. Trees are truly the answer to water quality.
- We see a lot of discussion on filter strips, etc. and we feel that there are a lot of areas that could be planted with trees. This is the answer to water quality as well.
- Potential partners identified were TNC, SWCD, Farm Bureau, etc.
- Some of this marginal farm ground has a lot of opportunity to reforest them and provide multiple benefits to society. There are a lot of valuable programs out there that we need to educate there.
- Another thing is supporting the right to promote forestry. There is a right to farm and we are always trying to make the case that we are a part of Agriculture. ISDA recognizes us as part of Agriculture but it takes a lot for society to understand that. Would like more awareness and support for it.

Katie- we weren't able to have a meeting with Mayor Debaun but he has a few comments:

Tom Debaun- had a Mayor's Roundtable meeting that sparked some of these comments:

- The communities are looking forward to hearing some things- as urban as Carmel and then as rural as Shelby County.
- Solar is a big discussion point here, move for large thousand-acre solar farms, urban farming was another discussion point- chickens, hogs, etc.
- My group will be looking for assistance in planning and decision making here.
- Has a group of 12 mayors ready to have the conversation.

Katie- asked David Kovich to bring up the key takeaways from the Builders and Home Development meeting:

David- had the Asst. Director of the Area Plan on the meeting which was helpful.

- Big thing that came out of the meeting was that we should have a meeting on development annually.
- It would be helpful to voice what we can do better as developers and what can be done to speed up the planning process.
- The developers brought up problem areas in having to do larger piping in water lines and not getting reimbursed.
- We need to do things right and keep environmental concerns in mind.
- Needs to be some changes made- vast majority of people like living in areas that have wetlands inside of it.
- Would be nice to get the public involved to have a conversation with the developers and local government.

Katie- we will skip the Business sector because Tom was not able to be on the call.

Katie- in addressing some common takeaways...the ILRC can help share guidance in a more effective way.

- How can we better share resources? In general, a lot of people aren't aware of the ILRC so this campaign helped make people more aware.
- A lot of constituencies would like to see more collaboration.
- There are several far reaching COVID-19 impacts and considerations on whether the council can help with guidance.
- Solar and renewable energy came up a lot, as well as planning for land use and expansion of development, and the concept of growth vs. development.
- Any discussion from council members?

Seth- it seems that the ILRC needs to serve as a convener and cross-sector of some of these groups. There are a lot of things I learned from listening to this group that were helpful. We should be proactive across sectors and have these conversations. We may be unaware of something the other sector is thinking/doing.

Katie- yes, and that came up when considering how to get group together.

Mayor Debaun- has made a lot of notes. Might be nice if we did a planning advisory summary of these kind of things. Unless we engage local planners directly, I don't know that everyone would have access to information. Would be nice if we could pull this together in a report.

Katie- yes, we have a word document with everything in there and it will be posted online with the minutes. It's a good idea to discuss how we can put things together.

Kara- with farmland preservation, where do things stand there and are there any things we should be doing on that topic?

Katie- it did not come up in a lot of constituency meetings. We have been talking to American Farmland Trust on this. We have created a one-pager with information that can be housed on the ISDA website. We will share it with the ILRC when it is approved. AFT released their state report that rated the states and its policies.

Jeff Page- on the farmland preservation...I was approached at the Land Use Summit by a couple people that came only for that session. They were just local landowners. They wanted to know if there was a state program.

Katie- right now, IN does not offer any funding opportunities for conservation easements, had an interim study committee last year to discuss it. A lot of presentations were made and then the legislature decided there were currently opportunities to let people do this in other ways. Right now you could get a 50% match through NRCS and then would have to find other ways to gain funding. There are several groups around the state assisting with this.

Seth- curious to get Katrina and Jeff's perspective on farmland preservation. How do you, as Farm Bureau, advise members?

Jeff- generally speaking, our policy book is supportive of farmland preservation. Advisements at the local level would range from working on planning and zoning to urging projects. From a policy development process, discussion about trying to incentivize solar and wind to preserve the most productive acres. It comes back to planning and zoning and how we deal with that. Discussion about preserving the prime land for farming and then the marginal land for energy benefits.

David- in respect to that, always thought that Benton County was an excellent county to farm and the pricing per acre was always high. On the other hand, it's full of windmills. Seems like the two couldn't go together. We don't lose much land with windmills.

Seth- wind development is a little different- challenges with infrastructure and maintenance. Foundation of a windmill is only a ¼ acre.

Mark Dobbs, NSA Crane- on the Farmland Preservation side, even on the Dept. of Defense side, there are programs like the Readiness Environmental Protection Integration (REPI) program that allows for preservation options. There are various collaborative planning opportunities and joint benefit opportunities.

Seth- would you mind sharing which military institutions this would apply to?

Mark- represent NSA Crane so this potential program is available to all military installations but requires encroachment agreements. Covers a 3 mile buffer zone for potential conservation easements. NSA Crane did a joint land use study with neighboring areas. There is a new implementation study- White River Military Alliance now. There was a web tool developed to connect these military programs to conservation programs like NRCS.

Katie- if you can send an email with some of the information we can include it with resources online.

Jeff Cummins- there is about 14 specific points in our policy book on how we support Ag land preservation. Comprehensive planning for urban growth, planning documents, easements, etc.

Seth- knew that annexation would be one of those. It would be of interest to this group as we see extensive growth in municipalities.

Jeff- a lot of points in the book are about reduction of conflict.

David- is there any legislation regarding conservation easements?

Katie- not currently- session will start in Jan. and we are anticipating that most things will be focused on COVID-19. Last two years there was a bill that would require ISDA to implement a conservation easement program. A few lawmakers have asked us to be better sources of information to the public on this.

Katie- something else I wanted to mention during this period was that we have had a few different groups that have approached us on renewable energy. Wanted to talk about pollinator-friendly solar and whether the council could do anything to support this. Would also like to consider a way that the ILRC could vet/approve projects that we want to promote through our council.

Kara- one idea of how to do that is to develop some sort of metrics for meeting criteria. The ILRC wants to make sure that any products we want to support and what we would put our name to. Science-based, peer reviewed, etc.

Seth- who would be our primary users of that endorsement?

Kara- for example, if a group comes to us like they have been and say they would like our endorsement of a project we want to ensure our name is on a document intentionally. It could be coming from counties, non-profits, local government, etc.

Seth- was thinking about the ILRC's mission and who would be looking for our knowledge. If we can be a liaison between companies and then the counties start relying on us for the endorsement that would be powerful. Does not think this oversteps the purpose of this group.

Kara- that could be one of the criteria- whether or not it fits the mission of the ILRC.

Jeff Page- I think it's a good idea and don't think we have to get hung up that it has to end with an endorsement. Offering a review would be beneficial. For example- the Natural Resource Commission had some hearings voting on wildlife. They were seeking advise to support or give review.

Richard Beck- would echo Jeff's comments. Endorsement is a strong word and it opens us up to scrutiny and liability. Would be more inclined to approach it as more of a review.

Jeff Cummins- that is where we land as well- as we hear from members that share about a county considering an ordinance but if there is someone to point to that would help.

Katie- we will think about what a rough draft of this could look like and then we could discuss at a future meeting. we have been approached by a few different groups and think this will only pick up. Also, we have been asked if the council would write a letter saying we support pollinator-friendly solar habitats. There is a lot of conversations out there on this topic and wouldn't want to get specific. With your approval we will write this letter of support and have everyone sign off on it at the end. Discussion?

Kara- who is the letter to?

Katie- the original request was from Rob Davis to send to Randolph County. Not sure it has to be that specific- can be more general. Basically it would be a support statement for this movement.

Seth- thinking about what that letter would look like and it's purpose. Imagine more of something that involves citations- if we want to go blanket support of a certain topic or practice we need to be well

researched and ensure we are saying the right thing. If we decide to go forward maybe we could send it to all counties. It has to be laced with evidence.

Kara- thinking through from an educational standpoint. We are not to do advocacy so there is a fine line when considering letters like this. I'm wondering if this should be more general and informational rather than supporting individual projects.

Seth- what if we put together a white-pager on why we think this might be important and then if we have requests from counties we can reach out to constituencies for them to utilize. It takes us off the hook for direct endorsement or support.

Beth- share some of Kara's concerns for this. Worry about the kind of precedence this might set if we start writing letters. Would another way to approach it be to revise the guidebook? Is there a place within that guidebook where we can include guidance on pollinator-friendly solar habitats instead of one-offs?

Katie- love that idea and agree with what is said. Perhaps we can work on this guidance that will eventually be put into the guidebook.

Kara- one other thought is that the Purdue publication does have some similarities to what our guidebook looks like. Will talk to Brock and see when the full thing will be ready. That could be highlighted if the council agrees. The ILRC could include a letter ahead of that.

Richard Beck- going down the advocacy side is a slippery slope and it doesn't fit our mission. Would avoid doing that as well.

Katie- Seth and I will talk about how to get a document together and then send it to other members. we will have something later this fall/winter to vote on.

Beth- is it something that could be included in current section of guidebook?

Kara- there is a section on renewable energy. Anything that we create in that format, it will be easier to have it as it's own addendum.

David- I'm agreeing but would need more information because I don't know much about this issue. If we can get some information put together it would be helpful

Katie- we can definitely do that and we can send a recorded webinar to you that was done as well.

Beth- Kara, you mentioned online learning on plan commissions. One common theme was the ability to strategically communicate the ILRC. Assume there is overlap between American citizens planner and guidebook. Is there any way to piggy back on that outreach.

Kara- yes, that is something to consider.

Katie- would the council like to have another meeting soon to discuss action items?

Beth- I think September/October would be a good timeline

Rich- I would agree with that timeline as well

Katie- we will follow up with a doodle poll soon to choose a date. Now we will move on to Kara to discuss the 2021 Land Use Summit.

Kara- regarding thoughts on the 2021 Land Use Summit...

- A lot of you participated in the 2019 Land Use Summit last August
- Our November 2019 minutes have a fairly good debrief discussion from the event
- We had 160 attendees
- The purpose was to gather stakeholders interested in land use- plan commissions, planners, management, etc. We hit our target audience well.
- Conducted a feedback survey and got positive feedback that justified having another summit.
- Decided it would be helpful to host every other year
- Purdue Land Use Team (PLUT) is interested in facilitating it as well
- The purpose of this conversation is to start the 2021 planning effort so we are looking for general feedback, dates, committee planning, etc.
- The other point to mention is that the first summit included introducing the guidebook and it was part of the summit
- We had 3 different sections on the agenda- Food and Ag, Natural Resources and Quality of Place.
- The event included 9 different breakout sections and we started registration at 8:30 and ended at 4:30.
- The agenda- panels, discussion and speakers were well received and they enjoyed the variety of speakers, and so was the venue (Hendricks County fairgrounds).
- Things to improve on- tighten up schedule with breaks.

David- do we have any more community guidebooks left to handout people?

Kara- yes, Katie can send you some from the office if you let her know how many. In addition, the URL for the guidebook is free to download so that is a good alternative option.

Kara- in regards to the 2021 summit discussion, what are your thoughts on doing a one-day summit? We held the 2019 summit at Hendricks County Fairgrounds in August which was well received. I have funds that we can use to help cover the cost, but they have to be used by October 1st.

Beth- should we consider an altered format because of COVID-19?

Kara- if we look further into 2021 but have a backup plan for an online option that might be a good idea

Seth- it might be good to do a hybrid of online and in-person

Kara- that is a good idea and something to look into. Is the one-day format good?

Rich- yes, that format was good. Does the event have to happen before Oct. 1 to use the funds?

Kara- no but the money has to be spent by then

Rich- does the funding only go toward the summit itself?

Kara- it would go toward anything related to the summit- printing, facility rental, etc. Last year we also had a small registration fee that covered food. In addition, we could look into sponsorships for the next summit.

Rich- I think the dual approach and timing is good

Kara- thoughts on the location?

Beth- I think the location from last year was good

David- I would agree with that

Kara- any other thoughts or comments?

Beth- from a budget standpoint, what does that look like? Are there any ISDA funds?

Katie- last year was paid for through a contract with Purdue. Going forward we would need other funding sources. ISDA is under strict budget cuts, so we don't see any money being available.

Kara- we talked about sponsorships last year. The planning committee should take another look at it for next year. One area that hasn't been well developed is vendors/outreach tables. Are there members of the council that would like to be on the planning committee?

Rich Beck said he would like to participate in the planning committee.

Kara- if anyone else would like to participate it would be very helpful. We will give feedback as we go along, but are there any topics we should focus on?

Seth- it seems that a common theme is the leverage of state and federal programs. That might be a good topic for the summit.

Kara- we will continue to work on overarching themes, but email any additional thoughts.

Katie- we will devote time at the Oct. meeting to discuss this further.

Kara- we will need to get the word out and decide on dates as well

Katie- any other comments from the general public on the virtual meeting?

Roll call was taken for adjournment and all members present voted yes to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 2:59PM