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township residents

## Update from the Hay Creek Planning Commission

January 28, 1996

### ***It's been a year since you heard from us...***

The Hay Creek Planning Commission members have been working on a township LAND USE PLAN for over a year. We still have a long way to go, but want to report our progress to date and ask for your comments. A survey is enclosed.

### ***We look to you for guidance***

Your comments from the November 1994 planning survey and the January 1995 Community Meetings guide our work. We concluded Hay Creek residents like things just about the way they are now. You appreciate Hay Creek's scenic beauty, its quiet tranquillity, and open spaces. You also value farmers and good agricultural soils. Conversely, you do not want housing subdivisions spreading indiscriminately across the countryside with accompanying problems of traffic congestion, noise, and higher taxes.

### ***Land Use Goals***

We developed five goals for a LAND USE PLAN. If necessary, we can modify these goals after reading your survey responses and comments. You will notice many important aspects of land use absent from our list of goals. We decided our LAND USE PLAN should only address areas where Hay Creek residents had a unique interest in how the land is used. Furthermore, we decided not to deal with land uses that required special expertise and were already regulated by another government body.

#### **1. Protect Agricultural Soils**

There are many reasons to preserve agricultural soils. A less obvious reason is that agriculture pays its own way. It is not a drain on local government. Why destroy the perfect tax base?

#### **2. Retain Farmers**

For agriculture to continue to support our tax base, we need local farmers. Hay Creek residents strongly support farmers and farming.

#### **3. Protect Scenic Character**

We could establish a sliding scale height limit on houses built at the top of bluffs. For example— a house built right up to the 30 foot setback limit (from the top of the bluff) might be limited to a 15 foot height limit; a house 50 feet from the top would be allowed a 25 foot height.

#### **4. Protect Natural Areas and Open Space**

We define "open space" as undeveloped land such as woodland, farmland, prairies, wetlands, etc. Just look around Hay Creek and you'll see lots of open space. The intent is not to stop growth, rather to manage it so loss of open space is minimized when growth or development occurs.

Housing subdivisions consume much more land than necessary. Often, lots are "too big to mow and too small to plow." Where housing subdivisions occur, we believe "open space design" developments should prevail over the more common "cookie cutter" type developments. For example— A farmer sells her 160 acre farm to a developer. A "cookie cutter" developer might divide the whole farm into 32 two and a half acre lots with no open space remaining. An "open space design" developer might put the same number of houses (32) on smaller one acre lots, leaving 128 acres open or undeveloped. What do we mean by leaving 128 acres "open?" It will be permanently undeveloped, left in its natural state. It could be farmland,

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prairie, woodland, etc. How does the land avoid development? The development rights are given or sold to a land trust. The ownership of the land might remain with the developer or the 32 homeowners might each own an equal but undivided interest in the 128 acres.

## **5. Ensure an Orderly Pattern of Growth, where it occurs**

We believe the principal threat to the "status quo" in Hay Creek is population growth. The world population is now 5.7 billion people and is increasing 1½ % a year. If you are over 40, the world population has doubled in your lifetime. Hay Creek has a population of about 800 people in an area of almost 36 square miles. Look at Woodbury and Eagan; our time will come. Growth of the township is inevitable.

Restricting the location of housing subdivisions is the single most important thing we can do to achieve our five goals. Like other growth, housing subdivisions should radiate outwards from established towns and cities, rather than leapfrog across rural areas. Leapfrogging subdivisions exacerbate urban sprawl and drive up property taxes. New homes may add to the property tax base, but they often require additional infrastructure and services that cost far more than the additional taxes they contribute. Conversely, agriculture has proven to be a very low cost type of land use.

In some cases, the Goodhue County Zoning Ordinance discourages concentric growth around towns and encourages people wanting rural homes to go farther into rural areas. The Cluster Development Program under consideration by Goodhue County would also allow leapfrogging subdivisions. Our township LAND USE PLAN should address these problems if we are to achieve an orderly pattern of growth.

### ***What's next?***

For each goal listed above, and with your input, we will develop policies that provide specific ways to achieve the goal. A zoning ordinance will put the policies into law. At each stage of this process we will keep you informed and ask for your comments.

### ***Common questions***

#### **Don't we already have zoning?**

Yes. We are governed by the Goodhue County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

#### **If we already have county zoning, why do we need township zoning?**

Our goals are different from the County's. Goodhue County has 21 townships, all with varying landscapes, populations, and goals. For example, the Goodhue County Land Use Management Department believes the type of land comprising most of Hay Creek Township is better suited for houses than farming. To preserve "better" farmland in other townships, they are considering a plan to channel the increasing demand for rural homesites into Hay Creek Township, among others. Since Hay Creek residents have expressed a strong support for farming, the proposed county plan would be in conflict with our plan [see GOODHUE COUNTY CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM explained later].

#### **How will the county zoning ordinance and the township zoning ordinance co-exist?**

The township zoning ordinance must be no less strict than the county's. For example, if the county allows a maximum of twelve homes in A-2 sections, Hay Creek Township cannot increase that maximum to more than twelve homes. However, the township can be more strict and limit the number of homes to a number less than twelve.

### ***Meeting for Hay Creek Farmers***

The Hay Creek Planning Commission will hold a meeting at the Town Hall on Tuesday, February 13, 1996 at 1:00PM to hear farmer concerns about agricultural land use and the future of farming in our township. We will look at some problems and issues raised elsewhere and see if they are applicable here. The purpose of this meeting is to help the Planning Commission decide how to achieve the goal of retaining Hay Creek farmers. Although this meeting is about farming issues, any Hay Creek resident is welcome to attend. Please call Elaine Diercks at 923-4545 if you have any questions. We will have refreshments.

### ***Goodhue County Cluster Development Program***

The Goodhue County Land Use Management Department is considering an important change to the County Zoning Ordinance. The Department held a meeting in Frontenac on November 15, 1995 to gather comments regarding the contemplated change. This change, if implemented as explained at the meeting, will vastly increase the number of residential homes in Hay Creek Township and rural Goodhue County. The Land Use Management Department refers to this contemplated change in zoning as the GOODHUE COUNTY CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM.

This program will promote residential development in A-2 (Non-Prime Agricultural) zoned sections of Goodhue County by allowing three to twenty homes to be clustered on land parcels of at least 45 acres. The program will not effect land in the A-1 Prime Agricultural District or the A-3 Urban Fringe District. Hay Creek will be strongly affected by this program since 30 of its 36 sections are zoned A-2. Please see attached sheet for more detailed information about the county proposal.

### ***Specific information about the Goodhue County Cluster Development Program:***

1. To be eligible, a parcel must contain at least 45 acres and lie in sections currently zoned A-2. In Hay Creek, A-2 sections include 1-2, 7-15, and 18-36.
2. A parcel must contain 15 acres for each home to be built. Example: to build the maximum of 20 homes, a parcel must consist of 300 acres (20 houses x 15 acres for each house).
3. Maximum lot size of three acres (note "maximum" not "minimum")
4. Fifty percent (50%) of the parcel must remain "open space." Example: if the parcel contains 300 acres, at least 150 acres must remain undeveloped. If sixty acres are consumed by building twenty homes on three acre lots, 240 of the original 300 acres, or eighty percent of the parcel remains "open." (Fifty percent open space reservation)
5. The required open space remaining is protected by covenant or public land dedication, dependent on landowner and township preferences.
6. Additional roads required for access to homes will be privately constructed and maintained, but build to local township specifications.
7. Homes will be 100 feet or less from these access roads (maximum 100 foot setback from road).

### ***Other Planning Issues in the Township***

#### ***Dry Cask Storage***

There are no plans to store nuclear waste in Hay Creek Township. Although several sites in Hay Creek were proposed in the recent citizens' siting committee, all were dropped from the list.

#### ***Shooting Range / Gun Club***

Plans to establish a shooting range on state land in section 13 of Hay Creek Township were dropped last summer. The shooting club later chose a site in Red Wing. That site, however, was recently dropped from consideration. It is possible they will renew their efforts to locate the shooting range in Hay Creek. Stay tuned.

### **New Goodhue County Government Center**

The Goodhue County Board of Commissioners wants additional courtroom and administrative space. If unable to expand into the old high school property, they may expand their search to sites on the edge of Red Wing. According to the Red Wing Republican Eagle, the County Board is considering a site (among others) on Highway 58. A new government center on Highway 58 will accelerate the expansion of Red Wing into Hay Creek. For more information contact Marlin Benrud, District Four County Commissioner at 923-4163.

### **Wells Creek Watershed Partnership**

This is a group of local citizens working with local and state government to come up with a vision for the Wells Creek watershed region (Wells Creek runs through Hay Creek Township). Call Beth Knudson at 345-5601 for more information. The partnership has set the following goals:

1. Keep the rural character of the landscape, our great quality of life, and community stability
2. Learn about our watershed resources to make good land management choices
3. Practice sustainable agriculture to ensure productive, profitable farming long-term
4. Increase water infiltration on the land to decrease runoff, erosion and sedimentation
5. Increase base flows in streams so streams run clear, cold, and deep
6. Maintain and restore wetlands and riparian zones to hold and filter water
7. Increase the area of permanent ground cover
8. Encourage a diversity of native plant communities
9. Improve land and water habitat quality
10. Link together areas of natural habitat along road ditches, creeksides, and forested slopes

### ***Please complete the enclosed survey!***

Here's your chance to tell us what you think. We put great emphasis on what we read in these surveys. In November 1994 we sent out about 260 surveys and received back about 50.

### ***Hay Creek Township Annual Meeting***

The annual meeting is on March 12, 1996, at 8:00PM, at the Town Hall. Polls will be open from 4:00PM until 8:00PM to elect a clerk and a supervisor. Remember, the world is run by those who show up!

### ***You are welcome to attend our meetings!***

The Hay Creek Planning Commission meets monthly at the Hay Creek Town Hall. All township residents are welcome and encouraged to attend our meetings. Call Dave Tincher at 388-9142 for meeting dates and time.

### ***The Hay Creek Planning Commission***

David Tincher, Chairman  
Don Veith, Vice Chairman  
Barb Betcher, Secretary  
Elaine Diercks  
Fred Fanslow  
John Jaeger  
Gerald Meyer