

## Land Use Task Force – Summary of Common Views and Recommendations Regarding A Second Ag District (draft 1-14-10)

### Background:

The County's 1993 Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan recommends that the County adopt a "2<sup>nd</sup> Ag Zoning District which will allow non-farm residential development to occur in a density of 2 homes per 40 acres, also on 3 acres lot sizes, to reflect current development patterns in small areas of the county." This goal has not yet been accomplished.

### Review by Land Use Task Force

The County Board of Commissioners requested the Land Use Task Force (LUTF) study the issues related to adopting a 2<sup>nd</sup> Agricultural Zoning District. Should the county adopt a 2<sup>nd</sup> Ag District? And if so, how should the District be identified and regulated?

For much of 2009 the LUTF studied and debated the issues surrounding the adoption of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Ag District. The minutes from regular monthly meetings are attached. As a result of this intensive study, the LUTF provides the County Board the following "Summary of Common Views and Recommendations"

### Summary of Common Views and Recommendations by LUTF:

This summary has 3 components: (each detailed below)

- A Preferred Option,
- An Alternative Option, and
- Recommendations that apply to all options.

Preferred Option: Stay with one Agriculture Zoning District but adjust the allowed density of dwellings based on the characteristics of the land. This option is further defined in the following paragraphs 1 – 6.

1. Instead of defining a Second Agricultural Zoning District by drawing boundaries on a map, the county should consider simply allowing a higher density of dwellings in the existing Agriculture Zoning District if the location of a dwelling can meet a specific set of compatible and avoidance criteria. (we will illustrate this point with maps...the green/white concept)
2. More dwellings should not be located on "Prime Farmland". At this point, the county should consider "Prime Farmland" to mean the USDA definition for Prime Farmland or other criteria that defines the inherently best conditions for raising crops. For example: a Crop Productivity Index (CPI) of 80 or more. (show maps)

### Preferred Option (cont.)

3. By allowing a higher density of dwellings on non-prime farmland, the county will be providing an outlet for people wanting to “live in the country” which should reduce the current spread of nonfarm dwellings on Prime Farmland. Furthermore, by providing an outlet for more dwellings on non-prime farmland, the county could further restrict the density of new dwellings on Prime Farmland. For example: allow one new dwelling per 80 acres if located on Prime Farmland but allow 4 dwellings per 80 acres if not located on Prime Farmland.
4. The LUTF recognizes that non-prime farmland is often the areas where drinking water and surface water is most sensitive to pollutants. Therefore, the LUTF recommends that when allowing a higher density of housing in sensitive areas, the county should include zoning standards that limit risks to drinking and surface water sources. (show maps)
5. The LUTF recognizes that non-prime farmland is often the areas where sand and limestone are most economical to mine. Therefore, the LUTF recommends that when allowing a higher density of housing in these areas, the county should include zoning standards that limit the loss of high value aggregate mining sources. (show maps)
6. The LUTF recognizes that non-prime farmland is often areas with the highest quality natural conditions (forest, grass, wetland, etc...). Therefore, the LUTF recommends that when allowing a higher density of housing in these areas, the county should include zoning standards that limit the loss of high value natural areas. (show maps)

Alternative Option: Create a “2<sup>nd</sup> Agriculture Zoning District” by defining a boundary where a higher density of dwellings is allowed.

1. If the county decides to draw a boundary defining the locations of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Ag District, the District should be located in areas where there is a high demand for rural housing and where there is already a high density of small (less than 40 acres) parcels. In addition, the avoidance criteria and zoning standards recommended in above paragraphs 1 - 6 should apply when locating and regulating a 2<sup>nd</sup> Ag District. (show map).
2. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan accurately describes goals and purpose of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ag District. The LUTF believes that an A-2 District can be located away from cities where large farms, hobby farms, and non-farm dwellings co-exist. AND can also be located next to Urban Expansion Districts to provide another growth ring for transition from primarily agricultural uses to residential uses.

### Recommendations that apply to all options:

1. Now is a good time to continue planning for growth. Current housing demand does not warrant immediate action. However, rapid improvements to the economy and housing market growth (example: Elk Run Planned Development near Pine Island) will put ever increasing pressure on local governments to accommodate the demand. In addition, wind power development will force housing demand to areas outside wind farms.
2. The county should remove the current distinction between a “farm dwelling” and a “non-farm dwelling” in the zoning ordinance. The LUTF believes that this distinction does little to regulate the density or use of dwellings and makes administration more difficult. For example: currently, one 80 acre farm could ultimately contain 10 dwellings permitted as farm dwellings (if the 80 parcel is split 9 times with a dwelling in succession). (show example).
3. Close proximity to a “paved road” should not be a limiting factor in defining a compatible location of more dwellings. Gravel roads are fine.