

Richland Economic Development Board

Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 12, 2021 at 1:15 p.m.

Phoenix Center

100 S Orange St, Richland Center, WI 53581

The Richland Economic Development Board (RED) met in person and virtually on Monday, July 12, 2021 at 1:15 p.m. at the Phoenix Center, 100 S Orange Street, Richland Center, Wisconsin. The meeting was held jointly with members of the U.W. Platteville-Richland Committee.

Chairman Gentes called the U.W. Platteville-Richland Committee meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. U.W. Platteville-Richland Committee members present included: Linda Gentes, Chad Cosgrove; Bob Frank, Lee Van Landuyt, and Tim Gottschall. A quorum was present and County Clerk Kalish confirmed the meeting had been properly noticed.

Mike Breininger called the Richland Economic Development Board (RED) meeting to order at 1:17 p.m. RED board members present included: Mike Breininger, Marty Brewer – County Board Chair, Clint Langreck – County Administrator, Eric Klang, Bruce Roesler and Bruce Kaasa. Jasen Glasbrenner - RED Director was also present. A quorum was present and County Clerk Kalish confirmed the meeting had been properly noticed.

Others present included: Dr. Michael Compton, Assistant Dean for Faculty and Staff Services, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Paul Breininger and Dale Bender.

Breininger noted that both committees fully support the campus and its continued operations. Breininger also reviewed various aspects of a Richland housing report that was generated as a result of a housing think-tank effort. The think-tank comprised of Mike Breininger, Dale Bender, Paul Breininger and Jasen Glasbrenner.

Administrator Langreck stated that due to stagnant revenues, the County has been forced to do the same or more with less financial resources. Langreck noted that revenues can be increased through net new construction within the community. Langreck also noted that the County is at half of its borrowing capacity, is stretched with providing non-mandated services, and struggles with deferred maintenance on various buildings within the County.

Richland Economic Development Director Jasen Glasbrenner and Mike Breininger reviewed a map of the land around the UW-Campus that is owned by Richland County. They pointed out the croplands that lays to the North of the campus where a housing development could be established.

The meeting was opened to those in attendance for public comment. A brief summary of speakers and their comments are as follows:

John Poole:

- *need to be mindful of past efforts/attempts
- *the preservation of higher education was due to local citizen efforts
- *campus brought world to a small community
- *wrong message will be sent to public if land is repurposed
- *campus plays a large role in economics as it brings people in

W. Birkett:

- *no data points for housing crisis
- *the criteria for top-tiered development locations was not illustrated in materials presented
- *just because something is easy doesn't mean it could be
- *only one solution to problem is being presented

P. Murphey:

- *the campus can and does change the lives of many
- *the campus filled an educational and cultural center nothing else could
- *selling or redeveloping the property in question sends the wrong message
- *the priorities should be on economic development or education

M. Houck:

- *shocked by idea of using land for residential development
- *the environment will be permanently impacted if the footprint of the campus altered
- *the campus is important due to social and economic impacts it has on community
- *questioned if decision-makers have been asleep for past 40 years and what the strategic plan is

D. Kopitzke:

- *not in favor of land being used for residential purposes
- *three main points: recreational use, budget (selling land is a singular burst to revenues and not continuous), and biological (more than just buildings)

S. Carrow:

- *commented that documents in question should be made available for the public to view
- *wanted to be sure that what we have is made better and not worse

N. Emerson:

- *personal education would not have been possible with UWR
- *geological aspects of land are important for education purposes
- *land is used in many different ways
- *campus is a unique geographic location that attracts students from all over
- *great start for both national and international students
- *housing will impact green space and deter those from coming that value it

D. Wentz:

- *hard to accept this proposal
- *future of campus is a concern for all
- *campus will offer \$250,000 in scholarships in 2022
- *advised to defer for 2 – 5 years if possible

J. Birkett:

- *higher education has been available in community since 1902
- *selling the land will appear as a weakness
- *the campus is a wonderful way to help Richland County as a whole

R. Hershey:

- *campus has been an educational, economic, and recreational asset to our community for over 50 years
- *image of campus will be weakened if land redeveloped—will be viewed as an abandonment to commitment
- *campus offers accessible quality green space
- *sale would be premature as the campus needs continued support from all

L. Wallace:

- *looked into stipulations of current lease of land and noted a minimum of 75 years was in lease
- *questioned if it was legal to break lease
- *people have worked hard to get it here

K. Ziegahn:

- *many of her students went to campus from high school and studied abroad thereafter
- *there was a lack of preparation for the meeting
- *use of Hive Drive as an accessible route is not a good idea

R. Bellman:

- *boundaries are unclear
- *mission of campus will be undermined
- *mistake to redevelop land
- *appears as though County is not supporting campus

M. Deckert:

- *how do you break lease—you don't

J. Bauer:

- *all previous are the truth
- *based on previous studies campus has impact of approximately 1 million on local economy
- *regionalization of UW Colleges was a disaster
- *campus is important asset and harm should not be done to it

K. Lewandowski:

- *preferred use of funding versus subsidization
- *campus offers amenities that make County attractive and the County should improve the lives of its \ residents
- *taxpayers will end up paying more money
- *campus needs to put more efforts towards recruitment

M. Compton:

- *passion for campus is at an all-time high
- *UWP wants Richland Center to be a vibrant community and offer a transformative educational experience
- *recognizes the need for housing in community
- *wants positive relationship with local leaders
- *important that conversations are taking place
- *significant investments are being made to campus in the future

D. Bender:

- *population doesn't change a great deal because there's not much area for growth—there are few options
- *the intent of think-tank research was not to be negative
- *community needs more houses and people
- *first phase of development would not be visible from the campus
- *a housing development would make the community more viable
- *no growth = more taxes

D. Seep:

- *questioned economics of proposal and impact on community
- *questioned impact on integrity of campus from housing development
- *could and should look to a neighboring city for reference
- *should consider alternative solutions as they are now

L. Van Landuyt:

- * “Wisconsin Idea”
- *housing is a temporary problem
- *sale of land will weaken image of campus
- *state legislature plays a large role in how the state operates
- *campus is a gem in the community
- *need multiple plans to consider

Those in attendance questioned the types of houses that would be built within proposed development site. Glasbrenner noted that the process started with determining whether or not the Board of Regents should even be contacted regarding the current lease. Glasbrenner also emphasized that the exact details of the development are unknown because the project has not progressed that far at this point and the committees agreed that seeking input from the public at the very beginning was important and needed.

W. Birkett:

- *inquired about the homes in the community that are currently in disrepair---has anyone contacted those homeowners?
- *resources are not being actualized—not thinking broadly
- *questioned the data source for job growth

P. Breininger :

- *the proposed housing development would be a solution for a current problem
- *people are choosing to move and/or live in other cities due to a lack of housing
- *there are few places to develop
- *many of the current houses do not meet modern standards

P. Murphey:

- *there are many empty lots that can be developed that are not selling
- *people could work together on cleaning up the town

M. Deckert:

- *would have liked Mayor to have been present for discussion

Glasbrenner noted a cleanup ordinance was recently adopted by the city and the tax deed process for the county is being reviewed. Glasbrenner also stated that no official plans other than strategic thought process has been addressed with the land at Stori Field.

L. Gentes:

- *questioned if getting something for less money have anything to do with this?
- *how will development impact the surrounding houses next to it?
- *when will this be finished?

Glasbrenner noted there was no resolution going forward to the next county board meeting regarding the redevelopment and the further discussion between committees and boards would need to take place. Langreck noted the intent of today’s meeting was for public input and discussion and that there were many more gates to go through. M. Breininger noted that land availability and the corresponding cost to develop it were major factors in determining the viability of development.

K. Lewandowski:

- *who will pay for this?

Breininger noted that many private developers are not engaging in projects like this, and as a result, many municipalities have taken on role of developer to facilitate growth and development within their own community. Breininger also noted that people are the solution for economic issues.

A short question and answer period was held.

Norlene Emerson asked if a show of hands in support of not developing the land in question was needed and Langreck replied by stating that it was not necessary as the wishes of those present was evident throughout the discussion. Frank urged those to contact their local representative with any concerns or to voice their opinion. County Board Chairman Brewer noted an overall concern with the ability to continue to fund all mandated and current non-mandated services and stated it is no longer possible to do everything with the resources currently available to the county. M. Breininger closed the public comment by restating that both committees are fully supportive of the UW-Platteville Richland campus.

Immediately following the public comment portion of the joint meeting, each individual committee broke out into separate meetings.

The RED Board discussed the need to fill a vacant RED Advisory Board Member seat. The current board will submit suggestions for a new member and there will be discussion at the next RED Board Meeting.

Motion to Adjourn - Motion by Brewer, second by Breininger, Motion carried.

Minutes compiled by Derek S. Kalish Richland County Clerk and Jasen Glasbrenner – RED Director.