

APPENDIX D

MEMORANDUM #2

**Visioning/Issue Identification
Sub-Area Meeting Results**

MAY 2008

In April 2008, four sub-area meetings, encompassing all 17 towns in Pierce County, were conducted county-wide. Though often sparsely attended, the sessions provided a valuable venue to hear from residents about their thoughts on jobs, town/county cooperation, pace of growth, agricultural preservation issues, and their vision for Pierce County over the next 20 years.

The January 2007 county-wide survey posed the “vision” question and elicited the following comments:

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| Town of Clifton |
| Protected natural resources |
| Good schools |
| Cluster development |
| Industrial growth |
| Better highways |
| Increased tourism |
| Low density, single family housing |
| Enhanced recreational opportunities |
| Preserved rivers and bluffs |
| Preserved open space |
| Preserved scenic views |
| More commercial, retail |
| Enhanced recreational trail system |
| Better access to rivers and lakes |
| Sustainable growth |
| Protected wildlife habitat |
| More affordable housing |
| Town of Diamond Bluff |
| Environmental integrity |
| Excellent schools |
| Sustainable growth |
| Increased tourism |
| More commercial and light industry |
| Increased recreational access |
| Town of Ellsworth |
| Preserved ag land |
| More retail, commercial |
| Preserved woodlands |
| Cluster development |
| Moderate growth |
| Use of PDR's (purchase of development rights) |
| Good schools |
| Low crime rate |
| More youth activities |
| Enhanced recreation trail system (bike) |
| Controlled growth |
| More ATV trails |
| More jobs |
| Planned growth |
| Quality development |

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| Town of El Paso |
| Rural |
| Small communities |
| Orderly, planned development |
| Cluster development |
| More services |
| "Bedroom" communities |
| More commercial development |
| Higher density in western part of county, lower density in eastern areas |
| Controlled growth |
| Preserved ag lands |
| More industrial development |
| Town of Gilman |
| Preserved natural resources |
| Preserved ag land |
| Small farms |
| Better roads |
| Slow growth |
| Maintain rural character |
| Create recreational trail system |
| More tourism business |
| More jobs |
| Competitive schools |
| Higher density in western part of county |
| Town of Hartland |
| More housing, more commercial, more industrial |
| Preserved open space |
| Cluster development |
| More youth activities and facilities |
| Preserved natural resources |
| Town of Isabelle |
| Low crime rate |
| More jobs |
| Preserved ag land |
| Planned development |
| Better transportation to Twin Cities |
| More commercial development |
| Town of Maiden Rock |
| Bluff preservation |
| Increased tourism |
| Preservation of environment |
| Rural specialty farms |
| Ecologically sensitive |
| Town of Martell |
| Rural |
| Preserved farmland |
| Controlled, planned growth |
| Cluster housing |
| Better schools |
| Public transit to Twin Cities |
| Protected habitat |
| More jobs |
| Preserved natural resources |

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| Town of Oak Grove |
| Preservation of farmland |
| Controlled growth |
| Development of a recreational trail system |
| Better roads |
| More jobs and business |
| Maintain rural character |
| Town of River Falls |
| Ag based |
| Recreational trail system |
| Increased tourism |
| Preservation of natural beauty |
| Farmland preservation |
| Preservation of wildlife habitat |
| More jobs |
| Small farms |
| "Bedroom" communities |
| Support of sustainable growth |
| Cluster development |
| Quality growth |
| Town of Rock Elm |
| Limited development |
| Maintain small town atmosphere |
| Public transit |
| Cluster development |
| Development in western half of county |
| Environmental protection |
| Town of Salem |
| Develop outdoor recreation trails (hiking and biking) |
| Maintain small town atmosphere |
| More shopping options |
| Controlled growth |
| Preserved farmland |
| Orderly development |
| Better roads |
| Town of Spring Lake |
| Steady growth |
| Employment growth |
| Preserved ag lands |
| Limit housing development on ag land |
| Steady development in western part of county, slower in east |
| Town of Trenton |
| Better roads |
| More recreation areas |
| Slow, controlled growth |
| Low density housing |
| Protected environment |
| Affordable housing |
| Recreational trail system |
| More jobs |
| More shopping opportunities |
| Industrial growth |

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| Town of Trimbelle |
| Controlled growth |
| Preservation of farmland |
| Development of recreational trail system |
| Maintain rural character |
| Cluster housing |
| Use of PDR's to preserve open space |
| Town of Union |
| Remains small, quiet county |
| Better roads |
| Limited housing development on ag land |
| Low density development |
| Controlled growth to maintain quality of life |
| OTHER** |
| Preserved natural resources |
| Controlled growth |
| Ag based |
| Better roads |
| Property maintenance regulations enforced |
| More industry, retail, jobs |
| Maintenance of rural character |

***Town was not identified on returned survey (question #1)*

The recent sub-area meetings drew the comments listed on the following pages:

QUESTION 1: Think about where Pierce County is today. How would you describe the current condition of the following:

Growth—Location, pace, and type (how do you feel about the balance of housing, jobs, and stores, etc.)

- I see an accelerated pace of large subdivisions coming in recent years. These housing developments tend to cater to the wealthy and are not very ecologically sound (large laws, lawn chemicals, increased run-off). There is also a push for a megastore.
- Growth is occurring outside of urban areas without much review of road capacity and other transportation; county needs to stick closer to 1996 PC Land Management Plan
- Growth is still occurring mostly on the west side; towns are being swallowed up; jobs are still scarce — many drive into the cities for work
- For the most part, location of new housing has been good; pace and type has also been good
- All about right; I think we need to try to produce more jobs
- We should look for more jobs and businesses in Pierce County
- Location is good; the pace for the county is slower than neighboring counties
- I believe that current housing is being developed in the appropriate places
- I don't want to see a lot of housing in prime farmland, but I think we need to let people of the opportunity in certain places
- About right
- The growth of housing in the rural areas is affecting the ag in Pierce County (negatively); there are not enough jobs or stores in Pierce County to support the urban sprawl, thusly making the county a suburb of the Twin Cities
- Plenty of housing available now — possibly imbalanced to high end housing
- Western townships are in a good location for access to outer state commerce, with access to rail and river and road transportation. People can cross the river for work. Pierce County is on the brink of a expansion. The eastern side of the county depends primarily on agriculture to maintain its economic base.
- I think it is good as it is right now
- More local jobs are needed relative to housing and stores; industrial should be close to towns
- At this time there are more housing and lots available than needed; conversely, there are less jobs
- Too much residential growth on west side of county while other areas not experiencing the same; anti-growth attitudes in River Falls hindering economic development and expansion of tax base
- Need some refinements
- The growth potential is here; development are all over; not much for high pay jobs
- As a retiree, I am satisfied with the current status but concerned about how young families can survive.
- Pierce County needs more stores to get more sales tax
- Business, industry should be located in cities and villages that have power, water, etc., to support the businesses; plus, the village and city would have the capacity to absorb housing, growth
- Cities close to Minnesota are growing; I believe majority of people living in Pierce County are employed in Minnesota; majority of shopping being done in Woodbury or Menomonie
- We need more retail in Pierce County, compared to St. Croix County, to get more 1/2% sales tax
- Too many houses built on good farmland
- Okay

Jobs, employment, and economic opportunity

- Lack of job opportunities in Pierce County
- There needs to be limitations on the size of large box stores to protect local businesses and provide good jobs
- Job creation is very poor; a high percentage of residents have to go outside the county for employment
- Jobs scarce; young people leave to find good jobs; farming not very lucrative
- Pierce County needs to do more to attract industry and more local jobs
- Should increase jobs if possible, and locate them close to Industrial Parks
- We do not have enough jobs
- Need for more job opportunities in this county
- as the economy continues to slip, creation of jobs close to home would be an advantage
- We need to help promote job and economic opportunity to help keep our local communities stronger
- Most of Pierce County seems to be a "bedroom community" to Hudson and west
- There seems to be a need for more commercial and industrial growth, to keep people closer to home
- Okay
- More local jobs are needed; "momentum" — will it help Pierce County
- Need to get more jobs in Pierce County
- County needs to find ways to attract investment and jobs; there is a need to expand the commercial tax base to provide more revenue to support county services
- Commute, educational opportunities leading to successful employment
- Opportunities are growing for the job market around River Falls; other areas not as much
- Probably not enough good paying jobs
- Pierce County needs more jobs
- Without the creation of jobs and employment opportunities, the economic opportunities for young workers will cause them to leave
- Jobs and industry are lacking trying to build up tourism, but real income comes from manufacturing
- We need more factories in Pierce County so there will be more jobs
- Seems okay

Agriculture and farming

- If there is an over-abundance of farming and now new housing or economic development, taxes will increase
- There has been a trend towards larger farms while smaller family farms are having a harder time making a living and usually have outside sources of income.
- Farms are transitioning to small parcels; larger farms are becoming more common
- Farming is still a big part of the county, but many work another job to support it, or they have to grow larger
- Preserve ag land; need to be more careful of large farms and their environmental impacts
- I think it is about right; the market usually dictates what happens
- We need to keep a strong ag base
- Agriculture should be our main thing
- Farms are getting bigger and are being more controlled, which is good
- I would like to see prime ag land protected unless adjacent to industry or housing development
- Preserve the good farmland
- About right
- Ag is still strong in Pierce, but has to compete with urban sprawl for land; sprawl has increased the price of land so much that it is not feasible to buy land to farm.
- Loses acres everyday to expansion of urban practices, while the present air might maintain that the industry is in a boom, actual overhead expenditures out weight the potential profit in today's marketplace.
- Very good
- Farmers were here first
- Farming is shifting to larger farms; less small family farms
- This is, and should continue to be, an ag-focused area; ag now also includes more horse/livestock in addition to crops
- Primary
- Agriculture and farming aspects are fine; taxes are an issue
- Seems to be doing well
- Pierce County needs more farms and houses
- Prime ag land should be preserved
- Farming is fading away (small family farm); large farms are replacing them; farmland is being sold for development
- Good farming in the county
- Too many factory farms; manure spreading (liquid) not being regulated
- Disappearing

Relationship between towns and Pierce County

- Our town decided in 1998 to follow its own zoning and land use; my relationship with Land Management is very good
- I wish we would get together and actually talk about what is/is not happening in the county; at times there is tension between County Board members and Town Board members; for the most part county staff is respectful and helpful
- No problems that I know of
- I don't feel it is very good; towns feel they don't count in what they want
- What we have here is a failure to talk to each other about what we want and need
- Should get together to know what is going on between towns and county
- Seem to work together very nicely
- Most of the time our town communicates and works well with Pierce County
- Work together for the most benefit for both
- I don't have enough experience to have an intelligent opinion on this
- Depends on which township — some towns perceive the county forcing rules and regulations on them, while others seem to be open for help
- There are some definite over-compensations, expectations for responsibility, and disregarding standings on the part of the townships
- Very good
- Significant differences between townships of the county may become difficult to unite and manage
- Compared to other areas, I think the relationships are good and cooperative
- Consolidate for efficiency should be a goal; voting is an example, fire departments, roads, parks, etc.
- I see no issues here
- Okay
- Town should have the major control over what happens within the town
- I believe there is a decent relationship, but I do believe cities are favored more than towns in most aspects
- Good relationship between the county and town government
- Townships should share road maintenance equipment

Natural resources

- Currently natural resources are in fairly good shape. Need to protect groundwater and have a thorough study of the hydrogeology of the area. The karst geology of the area is quite sensitive to surface contamination.
- I think the county is doing a fairly good job at Land Conservation
- I think we work together to preserve our resources
- Very high priority; need regulations on large farms
- About right
- Protect our small stream with run-off control
- All fine
- I think our natural resources are pretty good for this area, with timber and limestone, etc.
- We do need to protect our natural resources, but must also allow landowners as much leeway as possible
- We need a good mix of natural resources and economic opportunity
- About right
- I believe the quality of wildlife is very good but their habitat is under pressure; our rivers, streams are still in good shape
- Pierce County has many natural resources; emphasis should be on conservation, not environmental politics
- Small parcels of property have been set aside for the enjoyment of all
- Very good except that too many chemicals are being used in everything
- Preserve NOW!
- Strong concern and unified support to preserve natural resources from new and existing threats
- Preserve
- We have resources, but not much for public use
- Need to preserve the rivers, streams, wetlands, forested areas, etc., to promote wildlife habitat and balance in nature
- Key natural areas need to be protected; ground and surface water quality need strong protection
- Pierce County is doing a good job promoting and protecting parks and wetlands
- Good place to live

Existing planning and zoning efforts

- Uniform county zoning for ALL towns would be best
- Utilizing surveys and getting public input is an important start which has been utilized
- TORF has its own zoning by the county LMC and Board must approve any changes – takes some work!
- For the most part, very good
- Planning not good if towns feel that it is decided by the county
- I hope we have a good start
- We have to be better in planning
- The existing planning and zoning at town and county levels work reasonable well; I believe that town officials could use more education on many issues
- I think they have done a good job and hopefully they are willing to work with different people and communities
- About right
- Effort should be made to have some consistency between townships; cross a town line now and you can have opposite attitudes
- There have been times when the county has been very harsh on property owners regarding some zoning that doesn't make much sense
- Good!
- For the most part, okay; some not enforced with common sense factor
- Not sure current plans accurately reflect county's need for economic development, or take better advantage of its location near the Twin Cities
- Develop a realistic plan
- I see no issues here at this time
- Concerned about large farmlands being converted into "bedroom" communities
- Leave 1998 plan alone
- Keep most at Town level
- I think the planning and zoning are good, but enforcement is lacking in townships
- Right mix
- Zoning laws for gravel pits are way too lax

QUESTION 2: Consider the list of topics in Question 1. What would you like to see the county do?

What positive aspects should we preserve?

- Keep as much open space as possible to mitigate runoff and water contamination; try to preserve farmland with adequate buffers to waterways; provide wildlife corridors/hiking non-motorized vehicle trails; perhaps cluster housing would help; minimize further road building as they are expensive to maintain.
- Farming as a viable land use; prime farmland preservation; land conservation; clean air and water; wildlife habitat
- Keep Ag land and farming as much as possible; continue to preserve natural resources; keep the beauty of what we have
- Rush River valley; Mississippi River; general rural atmosphere
- Natural resources and agriculture, but keep in mind that progress is also important for others
- Get together more often with Town Board
- Farmland; all natural resources
- We should preserve our quality of life; keep our streams clean; work to maintain our road system; make an effort to keep our quality schools
- Farmland (prime); quality and friendship of life
- We should continue to preserve farmland and open spaces where it makes sense and is not already too late; some of the best farmland has already been developed; we should be careful about creating conflicting neighbors
- Diamond Bluff township has as good of a plan or zoning right now as we could ask for
- Rural character
- Maintain highway department and keep roadways at current standard
- Need to preserve the open, rural way of life in areas outside of organized towns—this is part of the quality of life; protect the natural resources (rivers, etc) as they are another important part of the quality of life
- Quality life style
- Keep rural reeling
- Make this a favorable area for agriculture; encourage private enterprise and zone for additional industry to not interfere with rural atmosphere
- County should work with the state to protect and defend the issues important to the towns; all key natural areas
- All are equally important, but industry is the key; with industry comes jobs, with jobs the economy thrives, and we can build better schools
- Good parks; keep 4-wheeler trails out of Pierce County
- When a person sells land (lot) for a house, he must put aside X-number of acres for farmland

What negative aspects should we change?

- Should try to provide more permeable surfaces for roadways and parking lots to reduce runoff; reduce traffic by providing commuter services to the Twin Cities
- Parcelization of land
- Keep agriculture in mind as we allow land to be removed from exclusive ag for building; it would be nice if farming could be sustaining and farmers would not feel they had to develop land in order to survive
- Let the feelings of the town residents be more important in making decisions
- I think the reasoning is good but I don't like to see a lot more paperwork and money to waste time
- We need to try to prevent as many conflicting neighboring uses as possible
- There are too many permits required for some minimal things
- Zoning review; real estate tax
- Needs to be a stronger focus on making area more attractive to jobs, investment and other economic development; the county needs to better leverage its position and location next to the Twin Cities, and its connection to highways
- Diamond Bluff taxes are up over 27% this year; fit it to stop abrupt increases
- Stop tax increases
- Charge everyone for garbage pickup on tax bills to help eliminate dumping on roadways
- We need lower fuel prices or the people who moved out here from the Twin Cities will back to the Twin Cities
- Improve communication with Town on items that are up for consideration and state and county level; this could be accomplished via the internet
- Zoning enforcement should be equal
- Pierce County has no negative aspects that I know of.

What is your vision for the county over the next 20 years?

- To preserve large agricultural blocks and preserve sensitive natural areas; focus most residential growth in cities and in cluster developments; concentrate businesses and light industry in River Falls and Prescott
- Growth will continue; people may or may not continue to desire small parcels "in the country" — some of this will depend on transportation, peak oil, high speed internet, and unforeseen changes.
- Keep the rural atmosphere — I love driving across our county and seeing the beautiful countryside; all the towns, villages, cities work together for the best of the county residents
- Good mix of agriculture and residential; promote industry on main roads
- That the county not dictate to all, but work with local town people; allow mix of everything; let the marketplace work as much as possible
- Keep this county rural; country living
- I hope that people can live and be prosperous in our county
- We need to somehow strike a delicate balance of growth and continued open spaces; the rural characteristics of Pierce County is why people want to be here — both to live and work
- Stay like we are
- A day trip destination — bicycling?; architectural considerations for new buildings
- Slow growth with more growth in Prescott and River Falls; continued trend for larger, cooperative-type farming
- A county that creates opportunities for dense, residential development within organized towns; a focus on how to grow and expand industrial parks while creating consistent minimum lot sizes throughout the rest of the county that protect the rural life style without negatively impacting farmers' ability to sell their land
- Try to reduce county government; look at sharing with adjoining counties for services, and possible even a merger of Pierce, St. Croix, and??
- More growth in housing and businesses
- To continue as is; farms, small to medium; businesses and rural atmosphere. Possibly more amenities for seniors who become disabled or unable to live alone
- Not much change
- Cities growing; towns much the same as today
- A place where we have thriving agriculture and factories for jobs
- Much growth

QUESTION 3: How should the county get there?

What specific challenges need to be met to meet the vision described in Question 2?

- Need to find a way to allow younger farmers to buy up existing farms with price of land increasing exponentially
- Economic growth is limited by high speed internet; the county needs to manage internet availability like they do with roads
- Making farming productive
- Fairness and balance between agriculture and residential
- Striking the balance between landowners' rights and the needs of others that may be in direct conflict (i.e., building in the middle of a 40)
- Allowing farmers to cash out while preserving rural character; identifying how house is developed (cluster? parkland?); does growth need to be limited?
- Needs to be a review and analysis of current commercial/industrial zoning to better understand what works
- Need leadership from the state and solve the many political hurdles that come up with the many residents whose jobs are in county government and services
- Keep taxes down
- Employment
- More people in Zoning Land Management
- We need more people in eastern Pierce County to keep our schools, fire departments, and ambulances in tact

What should be the county's role?

- Work with the state, private organizations, and towns to obtain conservation easements and buying up of development right of prime agricultural and environmentally sensitive areas; work on grant to obtain funding for alternative/green energy sources
- Investigate high speed internet — where is it available; where is cell phone use limited by provider
- Promoting ag related business
- Need to take a leadership role and help towns with comprehensive plan
- To enforce and follow the towns' plans
- County needs to support an overall vision that is focused on the "big picture": jobs, strong communities, good quality of life
- At least look at sharing county option in having latest and greatest technology and support; setting up joint voting opportunities between townships
- As they are today — listen to the people
- Analyze feedback from towns and work with them to achieve town goals
- Administrative role only
- Help the towns to know better about what is required and how to achieve goals
- Provide jobs with low taxes
- To do what the people want; look at all sides of the problem

What should be the role of towns?

- Towns and county need to be very conservative in allowing new road construction; many of the current roads are in poor shape
- Local input; management of day-to-day problems
- Be involved and informed, and feel that our opinions matter
- Protect its residents; provide fairness and balance
- Each town has a different set of problems, and they should have more input in the decisions that are made
- To develop the land use plans
- The towns should have most of the say in what their town should and should not do
- Town needs to be involved by refining their own plans to make sure there are clear rules for any development and zoning throughout the county
- Assisting in refining the plans for change
- As they are today — listen to the people
- Listen to the people in the town
- Zoning issues should be taken care of locally
- To preserve agricultural and rural features of the town
- Work with the county to meet all requirements
- The county is working good with our township
- Education of residents about their choices on land use options

Finally, the four goals set forth in the current 1996 Land Management Plan were presented for comment to gauge the relevancy of the goals, 12 years after adoption.

The following goals are from the 1996 Pierce County Land Management Plan. Please check your opinion regarding each statement.

| | STRONGLY AGREE | AGREE SOMEWHAT | DISAGREE SOMEWHAT | STRONGLY DISAGREE |
|---|----------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| LAND USE | | | | |
| 1. We should preserve for farming the great majority of the prime agricultural soils in Pierce County while allowing for changes in the farming industry and the rural economy. | 54% | 42% | 4% | — |
| 2. We should preserve the low-density, rural atmosphere of the townships while achieving steady, urban growth in the cities. | 50% | 42% | 8% | — |
| 3. We should make the most efficient and economical use of public funds and investments. | 97% | 3% | — | — |
| AGRICULTURAL, NATURAL, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES | | | | |
| 1. We should promote the wise use of land, water, forest, and other natural resources along with significant historic and archaeologic resources for the long-term benefit and enjoyment of county residents. | 79% | 21% | — | — |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | | | | |
| 1. We should promote good quality, fiscally responsible development in Pierce County through land use planning. | 63% | 37% | — | — |
| IMPLEMENTATION | | | | |
| 1. We should reduce county land use regulations to the level needed to achieve its goals. | 23% | 65% | 12% | — |
| 2. We should provide leadership and vision for the future of land use in Pierce County | 83% | 17% | — | — |