

Avon Hills Initiative Annual Meeting
January 24, 2009, 3 p.m.
Pellegrene Auditorium, Peter Engel Science Center, Saint John's University

Board members present: Peter Dwyer, Lowell Rushmeyer, Mike Leedahl, Steve Plantenberg, Jackie Leedahl, Allan Davisson

Staff members present: Tom Kroll, Bill Fahrney, Jenny Kutter

Guests: approx. 40 people

Introduction

Peter Dwyer called the meeting to order, thanking the sponsors of the "Living in the Avon Hills" conference held throughout the day prior to the meeting. The conference and annual meeting was made possible by LCCMR, Avon State Bank, Central MN Credit Union, and the First State Bank of Saint Joseph. Peter also thanked the conference planning committee and speakers for putting together the event.

Peter noted the mission and values of the Avon Hills Initiative and invited anybody to participate by attending meetings or volunteering with future projects and events.

Peter introduced the new AHI logo design and variations created by John Biasi for the Initiative.

Agenda

1. 2008 Accomplishments

- AHI worked closely with the county in the development of the new county comprehensive plan. Steve Plantenberg and Allan Davisson were instrumental in the process. A highlight of the new plan is the inclusion of a natural resources area for the Avon Hills. Work on new ordinances to follow the comprehensive plan is in progress.
- AHI partnered with the Saint John's Arboretum and MN Land Trust to secure a \$337,000 grant from the Legislative-Citizen Commission on MN Resources (LCCMR). The grant will be used primarily for community outreach and education, and providing funding for 6-10 conservation easements to be placed within the Avon Hills.
- AHI and Arboretum board and staff were instrumental in helping lawmakers to pass the new 2C forestland tax classification for landowners in Minnesota.
- AHI board and staff have attended several meetings and assessed the potential impact of the proposed CAPX2020 powerline between Monticello and Fargo on the Avon Hills area.
- AHI worked with the county to secure paved shoulders on County Road 51 for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, as the county developed plans to expand the road
- AHI developed the new Initiative Awards

2. New for 2009

- AHI will continue to work closely with the county on the development and final drafting of new zoning ordinances in the Avon Hills

- AHI will continue work to secure conservation easements with the MN Land Trust and landowners in the Avon Hills through the LCCMR grant obtained in 2008.
- AHI would like to continue to educate landowners about the new 2C forestland classification
- As always, more issues will come up throughout the year.

3. Questions on 2008-09 projects

- Is there an update on the CAPX2020 route?
 - o The route is not officially set at this time, but will run basically along I-94 from Monticello to Fargo. They are currently emphasizing the Monticello-St. Cloud link to stabilize the grid in the faster growing region around St. Cloud. The specific route from St. Cloud to Fargo is not set. There is a bottleneck at Avon due to the proximity of the lakes and city to the freeway, which poses an obstacle for the typical interstate right-of-way. CAPX2020 will propose a minimum of two routes to the planning commission: a route along the freeway, likely one to the north of Avon and one to the south. The planning commission will decide on and approve a route in the future.
- Is there a preferred route at this time?
 - o There is not officially a preferred route, but we have a sense that it could potentially go north of Avon to avoid the obstacle along the freeway.

4. Initiative Awards Presentation

- The Initiative Awards were developed to recognize individuals and organizations who are working to develop or preserve jobs, preserve open land, or promote the rural character, beauty and ecological health of the environment and livable communities within the Avon Hills.
- Each year AHI will accept nominations in four categories: Public Service, Conservation & Land Stewardship, Business, and Lifetime. Awards will not necessarily be given out in each category each year.
- 2009 Avon Hills Initiative Awards given to (see the attached description of award winners):

Public Service: Stearns County Commissioners & Staff

Conservation & Land Stewardship: Mark & Joan Strobel

Business: DH Blattner & Sons

Lifetime: Francis & Karen Schellinger

5. Other business

- A motion was made requesting that AHI pass a resolution in support of the MN statute supporting rustic roads. Rustic roads are generally defined as having natural features and scenic beauty, low traffic, a maximum 45mph speed limit, and year-round access. A second part of the motion was especially in support of designating Schumann Lake Road in Avon as a rustic road according to the statute.
- The motion was seconded.
- Vote was taken by a show of hands: 34 in favor, 0 oppose, 3 abstentions
- Motion passed

6. Election Results—AHI Executive Chair for 2009: Mike Leedahl announced the results
 - Votes were cast between two candidates for chair: Peter Dwyer and Lowell Rushmeyer
 - There was a tie vote.
 - A tiebreaker was decided with the flip of a quarter. Peter Dwyer, as current chair called heads as the coin was flipped. The quarter landed heads-up and Peter Dwyer was declared the AHI chairperson for 2009.

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 25 at 4:45 in SJU New Science 150

Avon Hills Initiative

2009 Initiative Awards

“Recognizing extraordinary people in the Avon Hills”

Stearns County Board of Commissioners & staff *Public Service Initiative Award*

The Stearns County Board of Commissioners and staff have successfully concluded an extensive and painstaking process of revising the Comprehensive Plan for the county. The Commissioners have a rare visionary perspective in regards to the long-term planning for the future of the county. Through months of collaboration with county residents and hundreds of hours of committee meetings and public hearings they have crafted a well-balanced Comprehensive Plan that sets the parameters for both a continuation of the farming tradition and open space of the county while providing room for orderly growth and development.

Mark and Joan Strobel *Conservation & Land Stewardship Initiative Award*

No other people on Big Watab Lake have done more to preserve and protect the lake than Mark and Joan Strobel. Over the last 22 years they have worked tirelessly to implement programs to prevent pollution and improve water quality of the lake. They have attended conferences, written grants, studied and gathered information to help educate the community, and promoted many antipollution efforts, including septic system compliance, construction of a water retention structure to reduce agricultural runoff into the lake, monitoring water quality as part of the Citizens' Lake Monitoring Program for 22 years, completing a Lake Assessment Plan with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, and developing a lakescaping award system with Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation to promote lakescaping and buffer zones. Mark and Joan Strobel's proactive and persistent work is helping to preserve water quality in Big Watab Lake and its watershed comparable to that of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area, despite increased local development and heavy recreational use.

D.H. Blattner & Sons, Inc. *Business Initiative Award*

Founded in 1907, D.H. Blattner & Sons, Inc. now provides construction services to the electrical energy industry across the United States and Canada. To make room for its growing staff Blattner has completed a new corporate headquarters building in Avon incorporating dozens of techniques and technologies that improve the environment in and around the building while reducing utility and maintenance costs. Notably the Blattner headquarters is the second building in the U.S. to be heated and cooled by an innovative geothermal heat pump and ice storage system. The new Blattner headquarters meets the criteria, and an application has been submitted, for a Platinum Certificate, the highest rating offered by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ of the U.S. Green Building Council.

Francis and Karen Schellinger *Lifetime Initiative Award*

Over more than three decades as they raised their family on wooded acreage straddling Kalla Lake Road south of Avon, Francis and Karen Schellinger have treated their land as a legacy for future generations. They tapped sugar maples in the spring. They selectively harvested trees for lumber. They opened the woods to the public using the Torgertokle cross country ski trail. They kept the big woods intact. At the same time they were building community among area residents of all walks of life. They encouraged local artists and artisans. They built with local materials and methods. And through the sawmill they supplied local materials to other residents. Last year Karen and Francis secured the legacy of the big woods for future generations by selling 100 acres bordering Shuman Lake Road to the Minnesota DNR for a Scientific and Natural Area, permanently preserving a beautiful and ecologically important parcel of the Avon Hills.

The annual Initiative Awards were created to celebrate individuals or organizations who are developing or preserving jobs, preserving open land, or promoting the rural character, beauty and ecological health of the environment and livable communities within the Avon Hills. Nominees are evaluated on the significance of their contribution to the well being of residents, workers, and visitors.

Award Categories

Public Service Initiative

Individuals or civic leaders who have provided extraordinary community service to the Avon Hills.

Conservation and Land Stewardship Initiative

Individuals or organizations who have contributed in a significant way to conservation and preservation efforts in the Avon Hills.

Business Initiative

Individuals or companies whose actions reflect the mission and vision of the Avon Hills Initiative, especially creating or retaining high quality jobs and pursuing sustainable development.

Lifetime Initiative

Individuals or organizations whose contributions represent a lifetime of commitment to the well-being of citizens, communities, and rural environment of the Avon Hills.

The Avon Hills Executive committee accepts nominations for the annual Initiative Awards each year.

- Nominations may be submitted by any supporter of the Avon Hills Initiative.
- Nominations must be approved by the nominated individual, business, or organization.
- Award recipients are determined by a majority vote of the Avon Hills Initiative Executive Committee.

<http://www.csbsju.edu/arboretum/avonhills/InitiativeAward.htm>