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RESOURCE USE ISSUES
AND
THE PLANNING PROCESS

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FOREWORD

This publication represents a collection of papers which were presented before the Second Northeast Extension Seminar of The Northeast Regional Committees. The conference, which was held in Boston, October 11-13, 1966, explored the topic of "Resource Use Issues and the Planning Process."

The seminar was attended by professionals in rural and urban planning, economics, and sociology; landscape architects; educators, agricultural agents; and extension specialists in forestry and wildlife, area development, and public affairs.

Included in this publication are all papers which were presented before the four committees and those presented before the Northeast Regional Extension Public Policy Committee. They represent current thinking in the field of resource use and planning.

Much guidance and support was given by Henry M. Hansen of the University of Connecticut, and Joseph Ackerman and R. J. Hildreth of the Farm Foundation to the Boston Conference and the publication of the papers presented there. Financial costs were underwritten by the Farm Foundation and the Institute for Research on Land and Water Resources of The Pennsylvania State University.

Finally, we salute Jack Brown and Carroll D. Price, II who devoted many hours to the editing of this compilation of papers.

John C. Frey, Chairman
Northeast Regional
Extension Public
Policy Committee

EXTENSION'S ROLE IN PLANNING EDUCATION
by Stanford M. Lembeck*

GROWING PUBLIC SUPPORT

Community planning today receives widespread grassroots acceptance in Pennsylvania. This is a far cry from the hostility surrounding planning seven years ago, when I first began working as a professional planner in the state. Many of our county agents, specialists, and area resource development agents helped to bring about this changed atmosphere; so did many professional planners, civic leaders, and governmental agencies. Extension was in the vanguard in recognizing the significant land use and development issues facing the state, and through meetings, seminar series, and personal contacts, it tried to make people aware of the kinds of decisions that would have to be made in the future.

There are now about 1,000 local planning commissions in Pennsylvania; ten years ago there were only about 300. The growth of county planning commissions is even more phenomenal. Sixty-six of our 67 counties have a planning agency at the county level, compared with only three county planning commissions in 1950. Measured in terms of the number of public-agency planning staffs and per capita spending for planning, we see a growing public support of community planning.

Even with this demonstrated interest in land use planning, we have achieved only the first level of planning acceptance. The planning process is not yet an integral part of daily municipal operations. Neither the public, nor private individuals, have shown a great concern for the implementation of plans. There is a reluctance to institute land use controls or to adopt long-range budgeting procedures for public improvements. The need to plan a new water or sewage service is accepted, but using the zoning mechanism to control population density within the service area is not. To sum up, land use planning is not yet a success.

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WHAT ROLE FOR EXTENSION?

The land use planning specialty on The Penn State Extension Staff is relatively new and was established in February 1965. It evolved from earlier Extension efforts, but its direction now is designed to meet some of the current planning educational needs of the Commonwealth.

It was necessary to establish a priority and emphasis for Extension's planning effort. Educational programs could be directed toward the general public, to elected officials, to planning commissions, or to planners. It is in the area of educating planning commission members, I feel that our Extension program could make the greatest contribution.

I think the key to an effective planning process is the planning commission. Traditionally, the planning commission is composed of lay persons whose prime function is to represent the community's interest in land use determinations. To these laymen falls the difficult task of translating community goals into a meaningful plan for future public and private action.

Of the 5,500 and more people presently serving on planning commissions in Pennsylvania, very few are equipped to undertake the job. There is no requirement that planning commissioners receive training, either before their appointment or during their term of office. A few conscientious ones prepare themselves by reading pertinent literature and attending meetings, but this self-help approach is too haphazard. Most acquire some information as their planning program is being developed by professionals, which enables them merely to get along. But they contribute very little to the process of planning.

The calibre of people appointed to commissions is frequently poor, which reduces the effectiveness of the organization and lowers its prestige in the eyes of the community. To date, local officials have not been sufficiently impressed with the need to appoint qualified and interested people to planning commissions.

CURRENT PROGRAMS

With the planning commission as the focal point of the Extension program, we began to develop our approach for training the lay planner. Direct counseling with planning commissions has been an effective way of providing them with basic tools to do their job.

We are most useful when we can consult with a new commission as soon as possible after it is formed. The first job is to assist in organizing and to explain the powers and responsibilities of commissions as outlined in the statutes.

In their basic training, the members must gain an understanding of the commission's relation to public officials and private citizens; they must learn how to direct the activities of a planning staff; and they need a working knowledge of planning techniques. In addition, when the county agent is involved, he can identify resource people and agencies who can contribute to the planning effort and he may be a source of information. We don't do any direct planning and we don't set up planning programs.

Along with trying to work closely with planning commissions, we continue to participate in meetings with local groups to create an awareness for planning and to discuss aspects of planning that are particularly important to the group. Seminar series covering land use and planning issues such as soils, water, sewage, recreation, zoning and subdivision controls continue to be effective in stimulating local action. The format of these seminars is flexible; any number of meetings may be scheduled and all types of groups may co-sponsor them.

We are faced with two problems in the types of programs I have just mentioned, however. First, how do we reach those planning commissions that were formed many years ago? Second, how do we tie the diverse program elements into an ongoing comprehensive educational program that will have long-term impact on planning efforts, and will best utilize Extension resources and competencies? The one-shot, isolated

meeting or workshop merely scratches the surface. Without follow-up it doesn't capitalize on any educational opportunities it might generate.

COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAMMING

In attempting to overcome these problems our present approach is to offer counties a comprehensive planning educational program, which is carried out in conjunction with the county land use planning program. The educational effort parallels the preparation of the plan, with the educational elements fitted into the sequence and timing of plan preparation.

So far four counties have agreed to undertake this comprehensive approach, and several others have expressed an interest in it. There are three basic parts of the programming.

1. Public Information Meetings -- These are of two basic types -- the individual meeting and the seminar series. Over a two- or three-year period several series can be scheduled, beginning with introductory topics and followed by others in specific areas such as plan development, land use controls, water and sewage facilities planning, and recreation. Individual meetings may be scheduled, devoted to any topic related to planning that may be of particular interest or useful in fostering public understanding of land use plans being developed.

2. Mass Media -- Newspapers, radio, television, and newsletters are used fully to present a continuous flow of planning topics, on a regular basis, to a wider audience than is possible through meetings.

3. Planning Commission Workshops -- This is the key illustrative element in the program. Series of workshops for planning commission members are offered in developing the land use plan, land subdivision design and control, zoning, public facilities planning, and transportation planning. In the future, workshops for zoning boards of adjustment and zoning officials might be generated. The workshops are designed to give the commission member a working knowledge of planning, not to make him a technician. With these skills, the individual should be able to contribute more toward understanding and evaluating the land use

recommendations of the planning staff. The result should be a better plan.

The workshop appears to have the greatest potential for training the lay planner. In the county where this type of programming has been used for the past year, we have been successful in attracting people from established planning commissions. Fifty-five percent of the persons who attended the spring workshop in "Developing a Land Use Plan" were from local planning commissions. The participants worked with statistical and land use data, evaluated it, selected development standards, and prepared the major elements of a land use plan. Instructors for the workshop included the county agent, area resource development agent, two Extension specialists in soils and planning, and the county planning director.

The comprehensive planning educational program has objectives other than the obvious educational ones. I believe that Extension cannot be effective in the area of planning education if it works outside the established planning framework in the locality. That is why these programs are planned, sponsored, and executed cooperatively by the official planning agency and the Extension Service. The relationship between the planner and the Extension staff is greatly improved by working this way. No threat is posed to the planning technician's position when he clearly understands Extension's educational function. The planner is more likely to call upon the Extension staff as resource persons when a good relationship is developed.

Another Extension objective is to increase citizen participation in the planning process. The acceptance of this approach represents a long-term commitment on the part of the planner to involve the public in planning. In the long run, this should help to overcome the serious lack of public participation that is found in most planning programs.

We also believe that much better scheduling and use of Extension personnel and resources is possible through longer range programming.

TRAINING FOR PLANNERS

Professional planners have a moral obligation to inform and involve

the public in the planning process. Unfortunately, most planners' education does not equip them with the skills necessary to do this. As a pilot project, a series of training meetings for planners was worked out with a local chapter of The American Institute of Planners. Extension specialists in rural sociology and communications offered training in motivating group and community action, meeting management, techniques of graphic and photographic presentations, and report and newspaper writing techniques.

When it was suggested to the planners that training could be made available through Extension, they expressed great interest in it. The discussions made them aware of their limitations in presenting ideas to people.

None of these training programs has been held yet, so an evaluation cannot be made of their potential effectiveness.

We also have begun to think about the possibilities of a training series in natural resources, which might utilize Extension specialists in soils, forestry, wildlife, and water. The growth of rural and regional planning programs in Pennsylvania in recent years indicates that there is a need for such a program.

OTHER PLANNING EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The lack of coordination among local and county planning agencies is a serious problem in Pennsylvania. It is beginning to adversely affect the value of the planning that is being done, which will probably worsen as more communities plan. In Pennsylvania, every type of municipal government as well as the counties may have a planning commission and may exercise complete planning powers and land use controls within its jurisdiction. Only the county planning legislation recognizes the need for coordinated effort. The code states:

"The County Planning Commission shall encourage the cooperation of the political subdivisions within the county ... as an aid toward coordination of municipal plans with the county plans..."

This provision of the act is largely ignored. Vague references to "home

rule" are used to justify an uncooperative attitude.

Workshop programs have already been useful in bringing about personal contacts among members of different planning commissions and with the county planning director. In one county, an association of local planning commissions, which sponsors workshops and seminars with Extension, has been formed. Having this association improves the chances of planning efforts being coordinated in the area. The membership of the county planning commission, which was created last year at the urging of this association, is composed almost entirely of association members.

We encourage the formation of these associations whenever we counsel local and county planning commissions. The use of local commission members on committees of the county agency is also encouraged as a way of improving feedback and gaining acceptance of planning proposals. By working together, both the county and local agencies expand the manpower available to accomplish their planning tasks.

EXTENSION'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Extension staff, with its local contacts and knowledge of local problems, can be extremely useful in pointing out the advantages of joint effort whenever it is important in the solution of area-wide problems.

What we have accomplished in the Extension planning program to date is (1) to assess the planning educational needs in the State, (2) give a point of view to our educational services, and (3) to begin to develop long-term programs to achieve our educational goals.

New needs and issues will undoubtedly arise in the field of planning to which Extension should be sensitive and prepared to move into with new programs. We are now building a foundation with planners, planning commissions, and the public that will enable Extension to continue to contribute to the growing planning movement in Pennsylvania.