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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 PROGRAMMING FOR PLANNING ASSISTANCE

by Peter W. Larson\*

### BUILDING WITH WHEELS

It is a pleasure to be here and to have the opportunity to discuss some of the many changes and challenges facing the Extension Service today. As I am basically a country boy trained as a horticulturist, with some economics thrown in, this city environment still bothers me. While driving up seven floors in circles to park my car, I thought of the big wheel theory: those who go around in circles shall be called big wheels. Well, I'm not officially a big wheel, but I would like to share with you my story of how one can build a program utilizing many types of wheels in the public interest.

My approach to program planning is to be sensitive to grass roots needs as interpreted by local people. The question of interpreting planning needs is the difference between the Extension program that I have evolved and traditional planning approaches. People working together can usually resolve answers for their own collective needs. However, a program for developing community planning often falls far short of desired objectives, regardless of how many people are involved, unless regional programs are considered as an integral part of local planning.

Because my efforts are at a local level and I am a regional agricultural agent without portfolio in resource planning, the story of how I fell into this work may interest others. The process of adjustment within the Cooperative Extension Service will necessarily vary within each state and county office. Therein lies the problem of getting an ongoing program out of the office. Often Extension is more resistant to change than its clientele. The answer may lie in new personnel or replacement of retiring agents with different types of resource people. Since resource management and planning is a variation of agricultural management, and resource planning is also a variation of home management and planning, and youth work has always involved resource uses, why not upgrade and retrain existing staff?

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The programs that I have chosen as examples of agent involvement, with personal upgrading by home study, along with cooperation among agencies are my own ideas and cannot be blamed on anyone else. I have been given a hands-off go ahead in a sink-or-swim approach with a 20 per cent time allotment for these programs. The other 80 per cent deals with my commercial floriculture industry of 600 firms grossing 10 million dollars annually. This in itself calls for maximum resource use planning.

#### FROM SOIL TO RESOURCE PLANNING

I fell into the area of resource planning as a result of working with the soil conservation service.

When our office manager retired, I was delegated some of his public affairs responsibilities including S.C.S. and A.S.C.S. Committee liason. As the then horticultural agent, my technical background best suited the needs of their clientele in a rapidly urbanizing county. Population jumped from 400,000 to over 800,000 in six years, and open spaces in farming dwindled to less than 100. Needs were changing rapidly throughout the state. Agricultural Extension was soon regionalized in a move to strengthen staff capabilities through specialization in service to commercial agriculture. Unfortunately, no provision was made for program change or service to allied agency groups such as conservation districts.

A parallel change in S.C.S. staffing is emerging in urban areas as farm work declines. The almost total commitment of more urban S.C.S. programs to community resource planning is an indication of need. An average monthly district meeting will see at least two or more towns represented officially, seeking aid with resource use problems.

The biggest stimulus to community resource planning is the S.C.S. soils mapping program. These maps replace the U.S.G.S. maps of the 20's with new surveys, including auger borings to about 6 feet. Interpretations are for some 40 or more factors classed in three categories by limitations for use. Since almost no part of the area is served by sewers, the use of

soils for septic tanks is a critical factor in suburban zoning discussions. Many other uses are made of these criteria, such as agreements between planning boards and conservation commissions over what is wetland and not to be filled for construction.

Perhaps the largest factor in the pressure for total resource planning has been the conservation commissions. Established in 1958 as official representatives of town conservation interests, these amalgamated local interest groups have used their enthusiasm over resource abuse correction to move mountains of legislative red tape. An ensuing strong program of conservation or resource use legislation has revolutionized the public role in resource management.

The planning grants of the 701 program have pressured community and regional planners into using more natural resource considerations in their plans.

When all of these considerations are focused on a community developing faster than its resources permit, a cry for help is heard among various agencies. When total development threatens, suddenly resource planning for an entire town and region then become essential. It is only when the essential needs are recognized by the local power structure that planning on any level becomes acceptable and imperative. The challenge in Extension education in community development is to help this power structure to recognize the crisis before it becomes imminent danger.

#### NEWSLETTER PROMOTION

My programs are multipurpose. The broad educational pattern and communication function is served through a Conservation Newsletter. This self-mailer contains timely articles and reprints from 2 to 8 pages in length. It is mailed, franked, twice or more a month to over 1,000 landowners and community leaders.

Community action programs develop from inquiries about specific problems identified in the Newsletter. I pioneered Extension's cooperation and natural resources technical team involving a dozen resource agencies in assistance to towns. A comprehensive resource evaluation

was produced as a tool for master planners to determine goals in planning. I now represent Extension on four county-wide teams in my region.

Since regional problems involving water pollution, water supply, flow and flood control, etc., are beyond the scope of one town, other organization was necessary. A few articles on watershed associations, land trusts, and zoning forms initiated interest that was quickly converted into action. A Neponset Valley Land Trust was formed around several influential and wealthy benefactors as a protective device for their holdings. An Association of Neponset Valley Conservation Commissions was organized to ward off industrial development of a marshland around the cloverleaf of two new interstate highways. Dredging of the river is a principal issue yet to be resolved in legal terms.

Conservation tours attracted bus loads, on several occasions, to view operations from conservation district practices to entire watersheds.

#### THE CHARLES RIVER BONANZA

The most significant experience to date has been establishment of the Charles River Watershed Association as a corporation. This group started by attending a series of Extension meetings on the watershed. After hearing what 25 agencies could do for them, ten towns agreed to send representatives to an organizational meeting. This resulted in a nine-member board of directors with me as coordinating director. When representation wavered in areas, we paid visits to conservation group meetings and brought them back into the fold. Subsequently, the board voted to expand the directorship to 21, in order to achieve broader coverage and encourage committee work. Nine committees have evolved, each with specific projects.

In two years, the C.R.W.A. has initiated a six-year, \$600,000 study by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, a three-year study on water quality by the Department of Interior, and a regional plan by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. The coordination between these agencies, local government, and the directors is a model of achievement. Local hearings have been established to reinforce questionnaires and maps along with individual town surveys conducted by C.R.W.A.

By working with community leaders in towns, cities also became interested. A core community group of five cities, represented by their planners, volunteered to support the program in their planning process. The river of our capital city was on its way toward a planners paradise.

So much attention has been given the Charles River by the press, television specials, tours, and behind-the-scenes political pressure that it became big political game. The Secretary of Interior was scheduled for a swing through the northeast to view pollution problems with state leaders in order to bolster political backing. This was supposed to be part of the interstate program of pollution control. The only stop that was made, unscheduled, was the totally intrastate Charles River. And it was the only river that received full-page coverage in Sunday supplements. In turn, the Charles River gained several million dollars in facility improvement program and study project funds.

You may call me a politician working behind the scenes if you wish. However, that is where the community development process begins and ends.

#### EXTENSION CAN HELP

Until Extension becomes involved deeply with community decision makers in the goal-setting process, we cannot be effective. If we restrict ourselves to parameters of educational and informational programs, our effect will be minimal.

When a leader calls you for advice -- and you can always give advice -- be cooperative, and let him tell you the best ways (alternatives) to solve the problem. Being a psychologist without portfolio is also part of this job. Be available, be positive --- and don't play sides, or you're in trouble.

Try to work through other groups, if possible, and avoid personal publicity at all times. Publicity should deal with the issue -- not with personalities, which leads to political struggles for power. If you are an adept Extension leader, you can interpret the needs and play both sides of the story without getting caught in the middle.



As an experiment in Extension involvement in the planning process, I have agreed to assist several legislative committees in determining needs of state resources to complement Federal programs. I have also drafted resolutions calling for legislative action. I have advised the platform committees of both parties. I have testified unofficially at hearings on legislation. Routine meetings with members of the general court have placed me in an advisory capacity with a finger on the pulse of community action programs.

Perhaps the biggest single factor in the development of these activities is that Extension is a neutral agency without a program to sell. All we can do is help. Most decision makers want help in making up their minds on where to turn without being sold a bill of goods.

Extension, then, has a history of resource orientation. Management is nothing new to us. The program potential of public affairs, resource planning, and community management decision making is enormous. It is also vastly complicated. The skills required cannot be learned but must be developed by experience. My answer to Extension administration policy on community assistance programs is: try it and see what happens. If the right resources of people, places and needs exist, there will be no problem. If people in Extension, with a lifetime of resource background cannot adapt to those broad criteria for success, then we have no business advising people on anything.

In essence, gentlemen, I am telling you that you and I can do this job right now. We are doing it. If anyone disagrees, I'll be happy to fight it out in the corridor where I do most of my work these days.