A meeting of the Woodlands County Pride Valley Area Structure Plan Steering Committee was held Friday, March 11, 2011 at the Woodlands County Regional Municipal Office, Fort Assiniboine, Alberta commencing at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:  D. McQueen, Councillor  
A. Deane, Councillor  
D. Yagos, Councillor  
L. Foy, Alberta Environment  
E. Smith, Sustainable Resources  
D. Kluin, Citizen at Large – 9:35 a.m.  
D. Mendelsohn, Citizen at Large  
I. Olson, Citizen at Large  
B. DeGroot, Citizen at Large  
S. Brouwer, Citizen at Large  
J. Whissell, Industry Representative  
J. Slootweg, Subdivision Officer  
C. Armfelt, Planner  
D. Klippenstein, Planner

MEMBERS ABSENT  T. Muhlbeier, Industry Representative, ASGA

IN ATTENDANCE:  D. Kapler, River Rock Sand & Gravel

CALL TO ORDER:

C. Armfelt called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Introductions followed the call to order.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA:

MOVED BY A. Deane to adopt the agenda as presented.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES:

One amendment on Page 4, in the Vision Statement; change health to healthy.

S. Brouwer, asked for clarification on Page 2 under Project Outputs why the plan is for 25 years? C. Armfelt indicated the 25 year vision would be the life of the plan with revisiting it every 5 years. Mr. Armfelt indicated this was a typical visioning timeline for planning documents as it gives a long enough time for projects to develop, but not so long potential changes in technologies and processes make decisions made today, irrelevant in the future. This would be the danger with a timeline longer than 25 years. It was confirmed that by setting this timeline for the
plan, this did not mean all the gravel would have to be removed in 25 years. The timeline and policy framework for extraction was still to be decided.

D. Mendelsohn expressed concern with how the decision making process would work for the document. C. Armfelt outlined the steering committee role is to put concepts together to present to the public. Once input has been gathered and the public direction clarified, the committee would have the opportunity to refine this prior to sending the recommended approach to Council via a draft Area Structure Plan. As Council is the approval authority, if there were inconsistent visions from the steering committee or between the steering committee and public, Council would have to make the final decision. C. Armfelt added if there were issues which could not be agreed upon they could be presented as a choice to the public to obtain a direction on those issues. C. Armfelt noted Council will ultimately make the decision on the plan and asked council members present if this was correct.

A. Deane noted the public involvement was very important and the process should be open and transparent.

MOVED BY D. Yagos to adopt the minutes as amended.

APPROACHES TO SUSTAINABILITY:

C. Armfelt gave a brief overview of the vision statement and presented how sustainability maybe be obtained by meeting the current needs without compromising future generation’s needs. It was stated research is showing sustainability can be achieved, but it is dependent on altering our approaches to governance and business. By utilizing the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach, the challenge of incorporating sustainability can be broken down to examine where opportunities exist to move the industry towards more sustainable practices. The TBL approach examines the social, economic and environmental components of an issue and can make recommendations regarding how to enhance sustainability of the project. C. Armfelt opened the floor for discussions on where the committee is at with the vision statement, how can the committee identify sustainability and where should the committee go with it?

E. Smith, SRD indicated sustainability can be a political issue and it must be understood the committee cannot change policy on provincial lands. D. Klippenstein indicated it is important the committee respect and understand the provincial and municipal sides.

A. Deane suggested it would be a worthwhile exercise to go through the example of the Calahoo Villeneuve Sand and Gravel Extraction Area Structure Plan to see if that’s what this committee wants to model.

CALAHOO VILLENEUVE AREA STRUCTURE PLAN:

D. Klippenstein provided an overview of the purpose and content of an Area Structure Plan. D. Klippenstein provided the historical background of the Calahoo
Villeneuve ASP and how the need for the ASP came about, what the municipality’s response was to the public and finally the formation of the steering committee. Many of the concerns regarding gravel extraction brought forward by the public in Sturgeon County were very similar to those in Woodlands County with respect to environmental, social and economic impacts. D. Klippenstein indicated the ASP included a jurisdictional review of federal, provincial, and municipal regulations. The ASP included an inventory of the natural resources in the area which included aggregate resources, ground water resources, wetland features, and soils and vegetation. The ASP also included development patterns and eight policy areas identifying existing and new land use designations. In consideration of the items identified in the ASP, policy changes and amendments to the Municipal Development Plan, Land Use Bylaw and Emergency Response plan were undertaken. D. Klippenstein closed his presentation by describing the differences and similarities between the Calahoo Villeneuve ASP and the challenges faced in the Fort Assiniboine, Pride Valley area. In Pride Valley there are more end land use options, less focus on agriculture, the location is near a major river, the area is less populated, there are more regulatory processes in place now (i.e. AENV’s Code of Practice, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, ASRD’s Guidelines and the County’s recent land use bylaw amendments) and there is more abundant quality resource in the area.

RECESS: C. Armfelt recessed the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

RECONVENED: C. Armfelt reconvened the meeting at 10:48 a.m.

E. Smith, SRD, indicated the Pride Valley area has several quarters of publicly owned lands which could potentially have six or seven different land uses approved. Of these potential uses, there is no public input process prior to approval, with the exception of gravel extraction, which requires a development permit from the municipality. E. Smith indicated the ASP policy needs to recognize the different uses and sequence them and determine what the potential end land uses are based on community needs and aspirations. E. Smith indicated the area has great potential for future recreational use. He also noted when SRD is weighing options for end land uses subsequent to aggregate extraction activities; they attempt to maximize the end use based on a triple bottom line scenario. He also indicated there has been some precedence where SRD has waived the need to act on mineral leases or lose them. In cases where landscape planning was utilized to determine the end land use, mineral lease holders were granted extensions to their leases to facilitate a more sustainable approach to extraction.

Members agreed end land uses and transportation routes are important to the plan. E. Smith indicated haul routes on surveyed road allowances are a municipal jurisdiction while private road usage requires SRD approval, he pointed out it is an area where the two jurisdictions could align approval. He noted that due to the
different grades of gravel and contracts, the gravel could be hauled anywhere in the province. Mr. Smith ended by indicating the Public Lands Administration Act is being revised and the new Act may provide some avenues for public consultation prior to the approval of land uses on public land.

Members discussed the quality of gravel in the Pride Valley area as being very high quality. Donna Mendelsohn suggested the gravel in Pride Valley has such high value; gravel should be obtained from lesser quality aggregate finds prior to extracting from this high quality area. J. Whissell cautioned the committee could not be telling industry what they can use the gravel for. Members agreed it was prudent to consider the value of the gravel in the Pride Valley area, but agreed they did not have the mandate to force where industry took the gravel to market. J. Whissell indicated industry needs to look at the economics of hauling and it might be beneficial to have a production facility in the area someday. Mr. Whissell indicated that due to the purity and abundance of the gravel in the area, it may make economic sense to bring the ingredients to make concrete products to Fort Assiniboine. He also indicated there was little likelihood of the industry booming quickly and extensively in the Pride Valley area. The Villeneuve area had sufficient supplies for the marketplace for the next 3-5 years. However, the industry would like to know the conditions for development in Pride Valley now in order to plan for business activities.

Lesley Foy, Alberta Environment (AENV) added the aggregate is 90 to 95% clean in the Pride Valley area. She also noted that much of the gravel in this area is located where the water in the gravel seam is considered surface water, and gravel extraction proponents need to identify this in their activities plan. The proponents may need to complete a study on how extraction in water may affect water wells in the area. At this point there was open discussion amongst the steering committee members regarding the surface and ground water dynamics in the Pride Valley area. It was noted some of the homes had very shallow wells. It was indicated by Ms. Foy, water this close to surface would not be considered “ground water” from a legislative perspective.

D. Mendelsohn suggested the committee was missing a lot of information in order to make informed decisions. The committee should have access to water studies, flood plain studies, potential environmental impacts and how many pits can be dug at once and still be sustainable.

J. Slootweg indicated that Woodlands County has a flood plain study in progress for the Pride Valley area. This study was instigated as a result of interest in recreational cabins, residential development and subdivision in the area. D. Klippenstein expanded further the flood plain study would identify flood fringe and flood way, which delineate what uses could go where. L. Foy, indicated in January 2011 AENV adopted a new policy called Surface Water Body Aggregate Extraction.
AENV indicated gravel proponents may have to, if within floodplain, supply any hydraulic, geotechnical or flood plain information and their mitigation plans for AENV approval. She indicated that recently pits have been approved in the 1 in 10 year floodplain contour after applicants presented acceptable mitigation plans. L. Foy noted if a flood occurred where a gravel pit existed and fish happen to get into the pit, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans becomes involved and most likely the pit would no longer be able to operate.

C. Armfelt gave a brief overview of the items discussed and that the committee would carry on the conversation of land uses at the next meeting of March 25, 2011.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

MOVED BY A. Deane to adjourn the meeting at 12:03 p.m.

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Chairperson                      Recording Secretary