

Fort McCoy Joint Land-Use Study (JLUS) Public Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 27, 2011
6:00 – 8:00 PM
14345 County Highway B, Rolling Hills - Auditorium
Sparta WI 54656

Attendance:

Mark Aumann, U.S. Representative Ron Kind's office
Peter Bakken, Black River State Forest
Allan Balliett, DPW, Environmental Div., Fort McCoy
Dan Braund, CenturyLink
Ed Carns, DPTMS, Training Div., Fort McCoy
Gail Chapman, Town of Adrian
Mike Crneckiy, Meadowview Middle, Sparta School Schools
Alison Elliott, Monroe County Zoning Department
Todd Fahning, City of Sparta Department of Community Development
Linda Fournier, Public Affairs, Fort McCoy
Ray Habelman, Habelman Brothers
Randall Heimke, Town of New Lyme
Toby Lowe, Tomah VA Medical Center
Doug Path, Monroe County Board
Terry A. Schmidt, Jackson County Zoning Department
Brendan Smith, Volk Field
Cindy Struve, Monroe County Emergency Management Department
Wayne Tuchalsky, Town of Little Falls Planning Commission
Richard Yarrington, Monroe County Board

Staff:

Dave Bonifas, Peter Fletcher, and Bryan Law, Mississippi River Regional Planning Commission (MRRPC)

1. Welcome and introductions

Richard Yarrington, Monroe County Board Supervisor, introduced himself and the staff members from the MRRPC, and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Monroe County/Fort McCoy Policy Committee. Mr. Yarrington then turned the meeting over to Bryan Law from the MRRPC. Mr. Law asked those in attendance to introduce themselves. After going around the room and getting introductions from each attendee, Mr. Law moved onto the next topic.

2. Background and Purpose of a Joint Land-Use Study, Bryan Law MRRPC

Bryan Law gave a presentation that highlighted the background that led to the Ft. McCoy/Monroe County JLUS project. This included the purpose of the JLUS, which is to identify any potential incompatible land uses between the military installation and the civilian communities surrounding it, and plan for ways that both the military and the civilian communities can avoid such conflicts and maintain a mutually beneficial relationship.

3. Presentation by Fort McCoy Officials on their mission, operations and compatibility concerns

Ed Carns from Ft. McCoy said a few words about the Fort and its place in the military structure. Mr. Carns said that the mission of the Fort is changing. It had been on a war footing in support of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. As those conflicts de-escalate, however, fewer military resources are needed for them, and therefore Ft. McCoy must adapt to new conditions while remaining a premiere training facility.

4. Process to prepare the Fort McCoy JLUS, Peter Fletcher, MRRPC

Peter Fletcher gave a presentation about the process by which the JLUS will be written. The Policy Committee was formed by inviting people from key stakeholder organizations and jurisdictions. Their ultimate job would be to approve the JLUS when it is completed. A separate Technical Advisory group (TAG) would be formed of people from the military and civilian organizations who have specific technical knowledge of topics that will be important to include in the JLUS. The Policy Committee is scheduled to meet four more times: in November to hear a report on the SWOT analysis conducted at this first meeting; in February or March to discuss the draft JLUS; in April or May to conduct a public input meeting for the draft JLUS; and in June or July to consider adoption of the final JLUS.

5. Public input session on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) regarding compatibility between Fort McCoy and communities

Bryan Law led the Policy Committee in generating a SWOT list with regard to Ft. McCoy and the surrounding civilian communities. Mr. Law began by asking the Committee to brainstorm the strengths of both Ft. McCoy and its surrounding communities. He proceeded this way for all four sections of the SWOT, giving the Committee members ample time to make suggestions. Answers for each section of the SWOT were written on a large pad on an easel at the front of the room, and as one page was filled, it was removed and pasted to the wall so everyone could continue to refer to those suggestions. This process produced many suggested strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, as well as suggestions for two extra questions:

- What strategies would maximize the area's strengths and opportunities?
- What strategies would minimize the areas weaknesses and threats?

The suggestions generated by this SWOT exercise are included in these minutes as an Appendix.

6. Questions and comments

Bryan Law asked if there were any questions. Hearing none, he thanked the members of the Policy Committee for attending, and reminded them that if they thought of more SWOT items, they could contact him by phone or email, or could fill out the comment cards by the door. They could also take some comment cards and invite others to make comments about the JLUS, since public input is a major tool in gathering the data necessary to complete the JLUS.

7. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting date was set for Tuesday, November 15, 2011, at 6:00 p.m.

Appendix:

Fort McCoy Joint Land-Use Study 09-27/2011 Public Meeting Comments

Would you like to make a written suggestion on how to improve compatibility between Fort McCoy and the surrounding community. If so please feel free to use this form.

Strengths

- Support strength of local, state, and federal elected officials.
- Continued improvements to Fort McCoy facilities such as small arms range.
- The Fort has brought diversity to the area.

Weaknesses

- Uncertainty of funding of Fort – fluctuation of civilian and military staff make it difficult to forecast business growth.
- Lack of political collaboration (state/federal) between Volk Field/Fort McCoy. Work together for funding.
- Military operations limit access and opportunity for sharing or development opportunity on Post.
- Reduces use of surrounding land.
- Environment is not suited to current and future conflicts (Middle East – Desert)
- Old WWII facilities and cost to maintain.
- Fort lost demobilization – why?
- Too many temp jobs.
- So far no benefit for local township.

Threats

- Lack of community, business, local, and state/federal officials in support of the Fort. All must be unified with BRAC forthcoming. Start the process of information flow as to BRAC – 2015 comes fast.
- Federal budget reduction.
- Military pull back.
- Role of reservists in future conflicts – changes due to current + or -
- Forest fires and natural disasters.

*Get more community involvement in this process. This should not be just the Fort McCoy strategic planning process. Committee should have a voice here too.

09/27/2011 FORT MCCOY JOINT LAND USE STUDY PUBLIC MEETING SWOT ANALYSIS

STRENGTHS

- Good schools
- Mutual aid agreements for emergency response
- Good utilities and infrastructure
- Economic impact of Fort
- Fort is relatively welcoming to public
- Fort helps train emergency services, State Patrol Academy
- Challenge Academy (statewide)
- Employment at Fort McCoy
- Premier training facility in country
- Veterans' access to Fort amenities
- Recreation
- Workforce
- Work ethic
- Non-residential land next to Fort
- (Buffer) – existing comprehensive plan and zoning – protect it
- Long history – long time part of community
- Good relationship – Fort McCoy and communities
- Reliable local businesses
- Buy-local attitude and program
- Good communities for raising families
- Excellent highway connections
- Proximity to Volk Field
- VA hospital
- Attraction of Department of Defense (DOD) dollars
- Protection of endangered species
- Environmental programs at Fort (stream restoration, etc.)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Fort is good economic development recruitment tool
- Fort raises area's profile by attracting high-level officials
- Fort is resource that attracts customers from all over Nation and World
- Fort is only training facility for certain units in 100s of miles
- Fort is adaptable to new configurations
- Close proximity of Volk Field, opportunity for joint training
- Fort McCoy airport – opportunity to expand
- Joint training between Fort McCoy and civilian emergency responders

STRATEGIES TO MAXIMIZE STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Improve communication between Fort and civilian communities
- JLUS planning effort
- Land use regulations (zoning, etc)
- Outreach and P.R. from Fort McCoy
- Include Fort McCoy in land use boards

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of continuity between Fort McCoy and Monroe County Emergency Planning
- No control of nonmilitary vehicle traffic through the Fort
- Unzoned towns
- Lack of a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)
- Possible increase in rail traffic thru Fort due to sand mining
- Location of power lines
- Interstate separates training areas
- Noise
- Vibration
- Transient population problematic for schools
- Department of Defense (DOD) payments for incoming students – is it adequate?

THREATS

- Budget (DOD budget is decreasing, but don't know how much)
- BRAC
- Agriculture could be threatened by aviation
- Residential and commercial encroachment
- Transmission lines
- Sand mining near Fort
- Temporary buildings
- State and local budgets decreasing
- Target for terrorism
- Dependence on fossil fuels
- Increased population – more development pressure
- Woodlands surrounding Fort are fragmented
- Endangered species can limit operations at Fort

STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE WEAKNESSES AND THREATS

- Communication – maintain JLUS momentum after plan is completed
- Implementation of plan – both by Fort McCoy and communities – both JLUS and existing plans
- Emergency response planning – local – federal
- Disclosure of real estate near Fort (noise, esp.)