

Draft Land Use Committee Proposal

Please send any ideas to Conrad, conrad@hawthornevalleyfarm.org

Purview: Review major proposed plans or policies likely to affect the greater HVA land base from the perspective of ecology, agriculture, place-based education, or culture. The Committee is meant to pilot one process of providing input on a circumscribed realm of decisions. Although a more detailed definition of its purview will be drafted by the Committee, the goal is to provide input on proposed land uses involving distinctly new activities in terms of extent or impacts; it is not the Committee's intention to review day-to-day agricultural, commercial or pedagogical decisions made within the normal geographical confines of the Farm, School, VSP or commercial enterprises, nor would it intend to provide input on building decisions happening within the current building envelopes.

The Committee itself could suggest that it weigh in on a given proposal and can be requested by the IMG, Executive Director, Board or the management of specific branch to begin such a process. After an explicit definition of the Committee's purview has been drafted, accepted and shared, it will be the responsibility of HVA and Branch management to communicate to the Committee when a plan or policy potentially within the Committee's purview is under consideration.

In addition to reviewing proposed plans, the Committee may, time permitting and at the request of management, undertake reviews of existing policies in order to draft or update guidelines on particular aspects of land use.

Role: The Committee is an advisory group intended to create a consultative review process that summarizes input and, potentially, provides recommendations but does not make decisions. The Committee will present its report to the Executive Director and IMG and, subsequently if appropriate, to the Board. The report will be attached to the minutes of those groups. If there is a diversity of opinions within the Committee or the groups consulted, then that diversity will be reflected in any report; the Committee may or may not provide explicit recommendations depending upon the unanimity of data and opinion.

The Committee will be charged with organizing input on and researching the relevant aspects of the proposed plans/policies before it. However, given that committee members already are well occupied, the Committee can come to the IMG and/or Executive Director if it feels that additional information is needed but that the gathering of such information is beyond the limits of its time or expertise. The leadership itself may also decide to bring in external consultants to contribute to particular issues; the Committee does not view itself as the sole voice of review, it is simply meant to expand the review received by a particular proposal. The ability of the Committee to fulfill its role will depend upon the good efforts of Committee members and the support of the Executive Director, IMG, Board and branch management. The Committee reserves the ability to abstain from review if, in its estimation, its work could no longer affect the outcome of a decision.

The Committee will have a maximum three-month window from the time when a plan or policy is presented to it within which to present its recommendations; shorter windows may be possible for particular situations and review windows will be determined at the beginning of each individual review. If no recommendations have been received by the end of the agreed-upon time and no prior discussion of a delay has been resolved, then the decision-making bodies can proceed without recommendations from the Committee. The Executive Director and IMG can invoke emergency situations in case some decision requires a more immediate response, but the fact that this is happening and why should be communicated to the Committee. The Committee recognizes that inserting a review process has the potential of creating a delay in the decision making process. The Committee will work with management to confine that delay to acceptable limits, but management may need to modify its practices somewhat by anticipating such delays in certain decision-making processes.

Given that the Committee is providing review and not making decisions, it is recognized that ultimate decisions may diverge from Committee recommendations. For the sake of the process, it is requested that the decision-making body provide a brief explanation of how/why Committee recommendations were or were not incorporated into a given decision.

One important role of the Committee will be to help define the 'consultative community' for any particular decision and, potentially, conduct some of those consultations. However, beyond consultation with the members of the Committee itself, no such consultation will occur without prior approval by IMG/Executive Director. During any such approved consultative process, the Committee will need to be clear in stating that it is a communication organ not a decision making group so as to manage the expectations of those providing input to it.

Composition: The Committee will be composed of employees of the Association interested in participating and willing to make a good-faith commitment to collaborate on conducting the Committee's research and the formulation of recommendations. For the sake of intra-organizational legitimacy and of having a relatively broad base of perspectives, this committee will include representatives reflecting different land use perspectives (e.g., agricultural, ecological, aesthetic, cultural, place-based education). In consultation with HVA and branch managers, the Committee organizers will approach individuals whose interests and expertise suggest possible involvement. Core committee size is estimated to be 7-10, with potential expansion or contraction in response to proposals under consideration. The Committee will initially be organized by the FEP and will be chaired by an individual chosen by the initial group. Until such a chair is chosen, Conrad will serve as the *de facto* chairperson.

The Committee's schedule of meetings will be determined by the task at hand. Substantial work may well occur via email and phone. If no relevant plans/policies are under consideration, the Committee will gratefully rest in suspended animation.