

BARRON ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 20, 2008

The Issues and Opportunities Session in Barron had 15 people in attendance. The attendee's affiliations were: Barron County Farmers Union, Barron Development Corp., Town of Clinton, Luther Midelfort Cameron, Healthier Cumberland, Four Mile Creek Dairy, Town of Clinton Coldwell Banker, Town Planning Commission, Barron County Farm Bureau, Citizens Against Raising Taxes (CART), Luther Midelfort Northland, and the Town of Maple Grove. Below is a compilation of their responses to the questions posed by the facilitator.

Why did you attend?

- To find out what is being planned and to exert some influence on the process
- I am an interested tax payer
- I am on the board of Supervisors for the T. Clinton and I wanted to learn something about the process of planning
- To get the County involved in town issues
- Member of Town planning commission
- I am concerned about protecting farm land for agricultural production
- To have some input in the county planning process
- For information and education
- I heard it was opened to the public and I support Comprehensive Planning Goals
- Because Maple Grove is starting their comp plan and I am on the clerk for the Town of Maple Grove
- Because I am on the board of directors of Barron Development Corp and the Barron Co, Farmers Union

What was the most significant thing we discussed tonight?

- Land use and Business Development
- Economic Growth
- Issues and Concerns
- Particularly interested in Agricultural issues
- Hopes and Opportunities
- Identifying issues

HOPES AND CONCERNS RESPONSES

As an individual, what concerns you most about the future of Barron County

- Economic Development, Good Paying jobs for residents of the county; Land owners should have the freedom to do what they want with their land
- Water pollution; proper disposal of light bulbs with mercury (one bulb can pollute 50,000 gal. of water)
- Farmland being used for housing in an adverse way. Barron County should use land that IS NOT Ag 1,2,3
- Barron County is diverse in its land forms and economic areas and a one size fits all plan would hinder proper development for an area
- More jobs; enough freedom for individual choices for property owners and others; keep the cost of living low; taxes; restrictive policies
- "Planting" houses on good agricultural land; maintaining a rural environment; sufficient economic activity to supply tax base for maintaining necessary governmental activities.
- Lack of Job opportunities; We need Hwy 8 upgraded between Almena and Barron with 2 passing lanes because there will be increased agriculture traffic to the Almena Grain Storage.
- Clean water for lakes, streams, and ground water; agricultural land protection; good management of woodlands so that the wildlife habitat is protected; Waste management; small businesses that get local support

BARRON ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 20, 2008

- Preserving agricultural land to be used as agricultural land; the threat of near by development taking agricultural land and forcing land values out of farmers reach. This leads to absentee land owners, corporate ownership or foreign ownership; we need to move from a welfare state to more job opportunities
- Lack of dental care & behavioral health services; transportation for elderly is lacking; good paying jobs; care for the environment; recreational areas with good access

Talking in your small groups what issues come up the most

- Infrastructure; recreational land; water quality of the ground, lakes and streams; safe disposal of light bulbs that contain mercury; better waste management (Barron County should stop taking other areas waste; Welfare and Public Assistance
- Economic Development; Rail opportunity; nuisance ordinance and enforcement; intergovernmental cooperation
- Land Use, especially good agricultural land being taken up by houses
- Business development and economic growth
- Opportunities for educated youth to return for good jobs; that we maintain the rural, pure character of this area

As an individual, what are you hoping happens in the future in Barron County:

- Jobs for young people so they can stay here; Reducing Crime; Judicial System overfill
- That Barron County adopts a Nuisance Ordinance that is enforced
- Balanced housing growth with good use of land; continued agricultural growth; it looks like large farms are the future
- Continue with rural atmosphere; sufficient amount of land maintained in farmland, forest, etc.; Continued acceptable education, public safety, and transportation activities
- Very good consistent planning; rules for county and towns – avoid exemptions; improved water quality; Green space and woodlands to stay at the current level; water quality improved
- I hope the population does not grow too much; That we have some employment opportunities open up; new businesses that just aren't services industry but also production and manufacturing; that we assimilate other nationalities to our lifestyle – we should not allow distinct subsets to slowing hinder quality of life for all.
- Clean and safe recreational area; clean safe environment; awareness and use of programs related to good health

What's currently missing in Barron County that you'd like to see?

- Recreational opportunities for young people and families such as Skate boarding, BMX bikes; Paint ball
- Bike Trails and other recreation for youth and adults
- An agricultural effort that brings together the resources and opportunities for the people of Barron County
- More good paying jobs, but not ones that would pollute they should be good for the environment
- Job Opportunities- we have a good educational system but our youth leave the area when through with school because of the lack of job opportunities
- Advocates for land and water protection working together/ a coordinated effort; Barron County needs guidelines and some enforcement for woodland protection; safe extensive bike trails

BARRON ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 20, 2008

- Tobacco Free environment; education as to the state of the county resources and what can be done to preserve them at the common persons level

CONCERNS

- It concerns me that mining companies are seeking to mine the frac sand in Barron and Chippewa Counties. It is a sought after material used in gas and oil refinery.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF BARRON COUNTY

- That Barron County does not use Ag land Class 1,2 & 3 for building homes – keep it prime farm land
- That Barron County would look into Transfer Development Rights as a way to preserve prime farm land
- For Barron County to designate more land for recreational use, especially quite sports, fishing, hunting, and trapping
- Roads and bridges need to be upgrade to accommodate large trucks. The machinery on the roads now are 2 -3 times bigger than what the infrastructure is engineered for.
- Bring in businesses that will use rail and the Rice lake Airport
- That Intergovernmental Cooperation will actually happen
- More economic opportunities that use our current population so we do not need to increase the population
- That Barron County aggressively pursues economic development
- Active family events / healthy activities that include farm walks, and trail walks
- For Barron County to make it easier for the residents to be “green” by providing a community composting site, and by providing a light bulb recycling site so that mercury is disposed of properly
- I would like to see more opportunities for economic development but not at the expense of Barron County natural resources
- Aggressively pursue sustainable jobs with decent wages
- More cultural and social entertainment opportunities
- Manage the development of large farms

MAP EXERCISE

- The water quality in the Chetek Chain of Lakes is bad
- We should utilize cluster development rather than sprawl
- County wide Hiking Trail map that capitalizes on the Ice Age Trail
- Agriculture run-off into water ways should be enforced or limited usage
- West of Rice Lake too much light pollution. Encourage towns and businesses to direct their lighting downward
- Lake Desair & others are very affected by agricultural watershed problems
- Continue to encourage woodland management and enforce violations so that the beauty and wildlife habitat is preserved in the Rice Lake area
- Decrease large paving projects, they cause runoff problems & water absorption in Bear lake Township
- Recover gravel pits they are ugly
- I'd like to have access to broadband internet in Northern Lakeland Township
- More public recreational land – it would be good for residents and tourists and economic development. Check out the County Forest Acquisition Policy
- Continue to identify protected land for wildlife habitat viewing
- More quite natural spaces

CUMBERLAND ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOV. 10, 2008

The Issues and Opportunities Session in Cumberland had 9 people in attendance. The attendee's affiliations or backgrounds were: a County Board Supervisor, a retired university professor, a registered nurse representing Healthier Cumberland, the UW-Extension Ag Agent for Barron County, a small business owner and father of two young children, a farmer who also owns a computer business, an environmentalist and mother, 2 Public Advisory Group representatives, and one that did not specify. Below is a compilation of their responses to the questions posed by the facilitator.

I. The comments in the first section are from individual written responses to the questions.

Why did you attend?

- To bring up health issues
- Curiosity, recognize need for planning
- To see what was happening, to participant
- To find out more info
- To provide input for county planning
- Because I want my community to become sustainable

What was the most significant thing we discussed today?

- Land Use – Manure Application, manure availability
- That we had a voice in how our County is being planned for
- Opportunity for walking trails
- What our hopes and concerns were.

II. Attendees were shown highlights from the Condition and Trends Report and the Public Opinion Survey, their comments are below.

Which trends/opinions did you find the most interesting?

- Decrease in Manufacturing
- technology related business was rated less important than the others
- less than 50% felt technology related business and downtown development were vital
- faster population growth
- Aging population increasing- need job retraining; peoples concerns on lack of economic development opportunities

Were there any you strongly agreed or disagreed with? Which ones?

- number of dairy farms is listed as being down from the past years- however the number of dairy cows is not down because the farms are bigger now

What other important trends do you believe will impact Barron County in the future?

- Higher energy costs

III. HOPES AND CONCERNS RESPONSES

As an individual, what concerns you most about the future of Barron County?

- There should be a small limited government ; Tax burden; Old management philosophy not keeping up with younger workforce
- Keeping resources cycling locally, i.e.: food and energy should be locally produced

CUMBERLAND ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOV. 10, 2008

- Children moving out of county to get an education and not coming back because of lack of jobs in their chosen field (brain drain); The trend toward home health care moving into a multi-county system
- Sustainability, Global Warming; Factory farming; stripped soil; pesticides; unclean waters; lack of preservation of agriculture land, forest land, wetlands, historic preservation and parks; poor quality of housing, big business = lack of local economy (locally run business being lost to corporately owned stores)
- Health Concerns; loss of schools; spread of population into agriculture areas; income level; hwy. 8 going to 4 lanes & taking more land; keeping our inner cities from falling apart; keeping business in these areas; ATV routes causing noise; managing housing so that new housing uses city septic systems.
- Barron County is ranked 52nd in health determinates & health outcomes; Consideration of impact of health on planning; locate housing in areas that are walkable to shopping and work; when building or renovating roads/streets allow space and accessibility for walking and bicycling; utilize transportation funds for walking paths and trails.
- Lack of Economic Development; good paying jobs; recreational opportunities for all – green space; keep our small town feel; the growing trends & mega farms

As an individual, what do you hope happens in the future in Barron County?

- Communities come together and realize they are in charge of their future and do not need to be so heavily controlled by outside stresses
- Schools & education improved; income levels improved; farmland preserved; taxes kept down; decrease use of low income county resources because more people are employed; better jobs
- Safe accessible walking routes between worksites, home, schools and churches
- Utilize abandoned railway corridors and other community places to establish walking paths
- More intergovernmental co-operation; aggressive pursuit of well paying jobs

What's currently missing in Barron County that you'd like to see?

- Higher paying jobs; affordable elderly housing
- Goals and visions that everyone understands and has a role or ownership regarding the counties plan for the future.
- Hospice care; alternative midwifery birth centers; solar energy; paper recycling; support for your local wind energy, community urban gardens, community compost, focus on staying local

IV. Table Discussion on Hopes and Ideas

This reflects the response of one table there were 2

Which hopes seemed to come up most often?

- Sustainability

Which “currently missing” things came up most often?

- We are failing miserably at becoming a sustainable community

V. Notes from General Discussion

Even though some of the comments below are duplicated in the Section I, it does not mean that they are the views of multiple persons. These comments were made verbally in a general discussion and the previous comments were written responses.

What are your issues?

- size of farms and sustainable ramifications of them getting too big; small family farms being lost
- educational needs as related to economic development & wages
- prime agriculture land needs to stay agriculture land
- Talk of Interstate 94 becoming a 6 lane highway
- Bridge in Stillwater developed for more traffic
- Bike paths/Walking Paths developed to defray the need for automobiles
- Health Care issues

What are your concerns?

- Protection of productive farm land (it should be protected)
- Manure from large dairy farms is not getting to small crop farms where they can really use it. Turkey Store manure is no longer available. Liquid manure is difficult to transport
- Better Waste Management in general- especially compostable goods
- "Cycling" Resources locally i.e. raise food and energy locally to be used locally- local energy and nutrient cycles (such as community composting)
- Smaller government; less government; lower tax burden
- Lack of Economic Development Opportunities and good paying jobs
- More infill business in current commercial districts – not extending the edge of town any more than it is.
- New houses should be located where work & shopping already exist
- More physical activity opportunities
- More walkable and bikable developments
- Older upper management stuck in their ways not taking on new ideas: i.e. allowing employees to tele-communicate from home instead of needing to come into work everyday.
- Light Pollution a serious problem (gave example of light coming from distant populated areas that interferes with seeing the night sky)
- Noise from big trucks on county roads

What is missing?

- Aggressive pursuit of good paying jobs
- Thriving local economy- less Wall Marts/ more locally owned businesses
- Good paying jobs so that there is not such a burden on social programs for low-income people
- Health care for county employees costs too much- it makes our taxes higher
- Health related initiatives at work and in communities to increase the health of the community. Proactive alternatives, healthy options in community
- Good Transportation systems (public transportation)

CUMBERLAND ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOV. 10, 2008

Additional Feedback

- I would really like to encourage the planning committee to read the Natural Step for Communities by Sarah James & Torbjorn Lahti. Other municipalities near and far have used this as a framework for sustainable community development.
- We should have more time, or an opportunity to be better prepared for the meeting

MAP EXERCISE

- More walking trails are needed
- Convert abandoned railway routes to non-motorized walking and biking trails
- when widening roads accommodate for bicycle/ walking areas and sidewalks
- Utilize ACE and Active Living concepts (Active Community Environment)
- Develop the walking trail that was part of the Master Plan for the Cumberland Ball Park/Hockey Arena
- The Public Boat Ramp at Horseshoe & Echo Lake need improvement

RICE LAKE ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 18, 2008

The Issues and Opportunities Session in Rice Lake had 10 people in attendance. The attendee's affiliations were: City of Rice Lake Engineer, 2 from the County Board, 2 from Citizen's Against Raising Taxes (CART), Local Foods/Sustainable Communities, City of Rice Lake, and the Barron County Sustainability Group. Below is a compilation of their responses to the questions posed by the facilitator.

Why did you attend?

- To provide input into the planning process
- I wanted to gather information on this subject so I could understand this when we address it on the county board
- Concerns for Barron County developing with a sustainable future vision
- To voice my opinion in agricultural issues
- Very concerned as to the effect that Comprehensive Planning would have on landowners & their usage

What was the most significant thing we discussed tonight?

- Local Energy and food system development
- Land Use
- The variety of resources that we have in this County-not just natural, but intellectual, human, educational, industrial, commercial, etc.

HOPES AND CONCERNS RESPONSES

As an individual, what concerns you most about the future of Barron County

- Continued rural sprawl- loss of farms, wildlife habitat
- Urban development outside cities and villages
- brain drain- losing our youth
- duplication of services not sustainable i.e.: police/fire/healthcare/gov't
- improving educational opportunities
- Sustainable planning- using resources in a way that emphasizes fair opportunities for all current and future residents
- I would like to see economic development put on a fast track, and keep the tax payer in mind
- Keep them rural but not to stop all development
- Keep our county growing with new jobs
- Continue a good road policy (trails too)

Talking in your small groups what issues come up the most

- Economic Development-Good Jobs
- Rising energy and food costs
- downtown development
- Control our taxes & yet move forward

As an individual, what are you hoping happens in the future in Barron County:

- Development with a vision for sustainable future trend
- Local production of agriculture and energy.
- Developing manufacturing for new technologies like wind turbine parts
- Recycling increased using modern technologies
- Continued moderate growth of communities
- County services provided within cities and villages- police, maintaining county roads/arterial & major collectors

RICE LAKE ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 18, 2008

- Improved intergovernmental relationships
- Business Incentives: Utilize rail and make it reliable
- Retain small town quality of life, natural resources, tourism, and small and large farm culture
- Better Jobs
- Keep our water & natural resources as good or better as they are today
- Develop wind power & bio products

What's currently missing in Barron County that you'd like to see?

- More local self sufficiency – meaning to produce local needs rather than shipping everything in or out
- More ties between campus resources & local development- The UW system is cutting edge in many areas, Barron County should take advantage of this.
- A Comprehensive Plan
- Renewable Energy
- County Recycling and composting facility
- As we grow older we need better Health Care & Services for the aging residents

FEEDBACK FROM GENERAL DISCUSSION

Even though some of the comments below are duplicated in the previous sections, it does not mean that they are the views of multiple persons. These comments were made verbally in a general discussion and the previous comments were written down by the individual themselves.

CONCERNS

- Economic Development is lacking – an example of this is the Industrial Park in Rice Lake not being very successful
- I would like to see a more fair opportunity for all residents – for instance it is fair to everyone when a large expensive house goes up in a moderate income area and then all the property values increase.
- I would like to see more renewable resources
- I would like to see Barron County become a sustainable community – Dunn County has adopted some sustainable guidelines – Barron County could set an example by establishing some guiding principals
- I want Barron County to be able to retain its youth by having good paying jobs for them
- I think we need to retain our residents in general
- I would like to see Economic Development Fast Tracked
- Don't just look at industry to develop jobs look to other types as well
- The clinics and hospitals coming into the count has been a good trends- they are good paying jobs and require a higher education
- We need more biking trails
- I am concerned with rising energy and food costs
- There is a lot of good farm land that is not being productive – a lot of idle farms – they should be considered a resources that we can tap into
- There has been a decline in small farms with big farms taking over – this is an environmental issue
- You just can't make a good living on a large farm any more
- With the loss of farms there is a loss in the business that support them
- There is a loss of small business in general to the big businesses
- There are too many empty stores in the downtown areas

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE OF BARRON COUNTY

- I would like to see Barron County develop wind power and become energy self sufficient
- That local communities will become more independent and decentralized
- That the county would do an inventory on which resources it is strong in – for instance:
 - we are not situated for using wind power, but maybe we have a better capacity to manufacture wind turbines
- We have a strong higher educational system with the UW and the Technical School
- Vibrant Economic Growth that offers opportunities for business to move here and to thrive
- Substantial incentives for businesses to move here
- Bring businesses that will utilize the rail upgrades that are currently being done
- That the rail line extends to the Rice Lake Industrial Park to attract potential businesses that would use it.
- That Barron County will upgrade and maintain the railroad system to make it viable for businesses to use them and that there are enough businesses that would use them to make having them a viable option.
- Maintain a quality of life that keeps people here and brings tourists.
- Maintain farming culture both large and small farms
- I would like to see more Farmers Markets around the county
- I would like to see Community Gardens in the towns and cities in Barron County
- Older people can garden
- Low income people can have access to healthy affordable food
- Create a working relationship with UW-Barron County and the Technical College to create economic development incentives, programs, training, and marketing.
- Invest in the positive development of our youth
 - Career Pathways
 - Public Outreach on alcohol addiction and binge drinking
 - Provide safe, healthy recreational facilities for the community
- Mass transportation that can get people around the county for shopping, doctors appointments, cultural and recreational activities.
- The Shared Cab System in Rice Lake is federally funded and people that use it find it convenient, but it only operates in Rice Lake.
- I would like to see a county wide recycling program – there needs to be some incentives for recycling, some people will do it on there own with no incentives, but others won't unless there are some incentives
- I would like to see the towns and villages have a community composting center
- We need to protect surface water from getting contaminated
- Tie incentives for higher education to economic development
- The rent on commercial property is so high that it is difficult for an entrepreneur to get started
- We need to market all the great things about Barron County:
 - Natural Resources
 - The good work ethic of the people
 - The fact that the people are well educated
 - The educational opportunities that exist
 - The trees as a commodity
- We need to study what we have in terms of resources and what products we are best suited to produce
- Develop an expertise in “cleaning up” Barron County and use this as a way to promote the area and our expertise in general

RICE LAKE ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES SESSION - NOVEMBER 18, 2008

- Promote the small town atmosphere
- Develop a better Tourism industry
- Investigate what products, services, opportunities we can offer tourists

- Preserve Prime Farmland and use Transfer Development Rights if necessary.
- Use Cluster Development with ample green space when designing new residential areas.

MAP EXERCISE

- Look into Power Generation at Rice Lake & Chetek for local consumption
- Develop and advertize Quite Sports Trails and Preserve the last stretch of the Tuscobia State Trail
- Water Quality improvement is needed in the Chetek Chain of Lakes
- We need walking trails in the county parks on the east side of the County
- The development of the Lake Shore has resulted in loss of native vegetation on the East Shore of Rice Lake
- There are drainage surface and stormwater run-off problems in the commercial developments near Hwy 53 Southwest of Rice Lake
- Promote air service & business usage at Rice Lake Airport
- The incidence of cancer is on the rise in Northern Oak Grove Township and the wells are drying up
- Water Quality in Chetek lakes and Red Cedar River need to be addressed
- We need cluster development instead of sprawl
- Agriculture land and natural habitats are being taken up by lawns.

Agricultural Issues and Challenges Facing Barron County Today

(As expressed by the 14 participants of the Agriculture Focus Meeting: small and large scale farmers, retired farmers, organic farmers, and other concerned residents).

ENVIRONMENT

- loss of land to dispose of manure
- soil Erosion
- manure overload – too many animals in one area
- clearing of marginal land is causing erosion
- the unknown effects of herbicides, pesticides, and growth hormones in food
- effects of high capacity irrigation systems on ground water
- mineral pits
- we need to decrease pollution from agricultural related sources
- factory farms are contributing negatively to our community in regards to soil quality, water quality, and global warming
- access to water is a problem
- adjacent properties getting contaminated by pesticides, herbicides, and pollen
- water quality is getting compromised due to surface and ground pesticide contamination
- there is an increase of row crops for bio-fuels on erosive soils
- buffers are needed along water ways
- there should be more of a focus on the concepts of sustainability
- not utilizing crop residue, and continued use depletes the soil of its nutrients – “no-till” practices should be in place

TAXES

- woodland grazing for lower taxes
- recreation land prices are driving up the price of agriculture land

ZONING & PRESERVATION

- loss of prime ag land due to sprawl
- loss of prime farm land in general
- ag land is a renewable resource if it is used for agriculture
- the encroachment of urban land onto prime agriculture land
- the lack of incentives not to sell ag land for non-farm uses
- zoning requirements sometimes cause the breakup of commercially feasible sizes of farming tracks – such as the Ag. 2 minimum requirement of 17 acres.
- the 17 acre requirement is not working, it is too big and it does not address clusters
- the effect on adjacent commercial property is not considered
- people buy good crop land and put a house in the middle of the field
- need better buffers between farm and non-farm property
- it is very challenging to get non-traditional agriculture zoning and permits
- there is a lack of flexibility when it comes to agriculture zoning
- scattered housing in prime agricultural areas
- land being subdivided
- rural housing and housing developments should be encouraged to locate on non-prime ag. land
- there is a lack of incentives to preserve prime farm land for the future
- forest land is being cleared for crop land
- the demand for rural acreage for high priced homes has taken land out of agricultural use
- economic pressures encourage farmers to break up large tracks of ag land in order to sell at a higher price
- farm land preservation

FARM LONGEVITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- to many roads are being built or expanded onto farmland
- farm labor
- local organic farmers struggle to sell their products in our community
- farmland is being developed or sold to larger corporations
- the sale of the family farm and the decline of youth going into agriculture
- more and more governmental constraints put on farming
- the changing face of agriculture in Barron County
- family run dairy farms are no longer economically viable
- more money is needed for small farmers to afford improvements in machinery and buildings
- funding for non-traditional ag land use
- environmental standards set onto agriculture are stricter than necessary in Barron County than in other counties or states making farming more difficult
- price of health insurance together with the declining value of farm products is leading to a loss of family farms
- we are importing more than we are exporting
- grazing based agriculture is the best solution
- there should be incentives for small farmers and organic farmers to live and work in the county

LOCAL FOODS

- global corporations have a monopoly on the food industry
- local agriculture is struggling to benefit the local economy and the local people while food is shipped in and out of the area
- there is a lack of incentives for organic and CSA farmers
- regulations on organic farming and the lack of feed mills make it difficult to process grains for local use
- local farms minimally address the food needs of Barron County residents

SOCIAL & HEALTH

- education for the next generation
- genetic modification and monoculture
- complaints from non-farm rural residents about farm odors and operations
- Obesity, diabetes,
- health and social justice issues
- food safety

The following is a compilation of feedback from the 7 attendees at the Cultural Resources Focus Meeting held on March 10, 2009. Some of these responses also reflect the opinions of 5 individuals that participated via phone interview prior to the meeting. Duane Hebert, Barron County Administrator, facilitated an open discussion among the invited group of stakeholders. Below are their responses to the questions he posed.

WHY SHOULD WE PRESERVE CULTURAL RESOURCES?

1. To make connections to the broader relationships such as: natural resources; geographic features; the economy; the society; education; health care; ethnic issues; the regional and national impact of logging and how it contributed to the development of towns; the economic history and present day life of Barron County

- Brings people together socially and for entertainment
- Arts education in schools are the first things to be cut from a school budget: Theater, band, music, vocal, fine arts, even Tech Ed and Agriculture courses
- Civic involvement, sense of ownership in past can foster a level of responsibility and involvement with the community
- Research is showing that younger people enjoy living in communities that accept and foster ethnic, cultural and religious, diversity. Looking 20 years into the future to attract a younger workforce this is an area that Barron County can use to its favor and improve on.
 - Offer choices in terms of the "Third Place": [Places to go other than home or work/school for a social connection].

2. To preserve and protect sites, buildings, and objects so that they are not arbitrarily destroyed

- Everyday electronic and other gadgets and machines that will be outdated in 20 years, such as computer operating systems, and data storage. Information on hard drives and other electronic media that will be lost due to progress and obsolescence.
- Stories of how we do things now and how we use to do them that demonstrate how we are a product of our times. An example is the ringer washing machine compared to the modern day electric wash machine.
- The Pioneer Village collects some of these items for posterity and education
- If we don't preserve certain things they will be lost forever
- The remaining Indian Burial Mounds should be protected, so many of them have been vandalized in the past.
- Native American Culture should be preserved through lectures and presentations, especially at significant times of the year (prior to Columbus Day). Storytelling can be done in the winter.
- The history of trains in the County, preserve the rights-of-way in the County.
 - The Rice Lake Corridor called the Avenue Project is "rail banked" it can not be owned by anyone because it is "rail first" according to the Surface Transportation Board.
- Attractive towns and historically significant areas of towns, or towns that have established a "sense of place" or historic references are more likely to attract tourists and visitors
- The history of the Knapp Stout Company should be preserved
 - In the 1870's it had 500 employees. [River Falls and Menomonee, where the headquarters for Knapp Stout was, has a lot about this in their museum]
- Historic Structures – There should be an analysis of embodied energy that exists in the structure and materials, the cost related to tearing down and disposal compared to building new.
 - Consider retro-fitting churches, schools, or other historically significant buildings for new uses, such as: retail, museum, office space, etc.
 - When a building is built it should meet criteria as to its significance in 20 – 30 years of how it can be retro-fitted or used for a different purpose than originally designed. An example is what would be the use of a big box store be in the future, would it need to be demolished?
 - There should be a record of buildings in the county with date, architect, original use/owner, type, and style through the years; including new buildings
 - Not only buildings, but things/objects: an example is the County Seat that has been preserved and displayed
 - It is unfortunate that The Carnegie Library in Rice Lake was torn down

- New architecture should fit into the area – Example: in Chetek if they ever build a new library it can be reminiscent of the Old Depot. Ask the question how does it fit into the community's values
- **Statues or sculptures in parks to mark history**
 - Such as the War Memorial in Lakeside Park in Rice Lake
 - People are looking for experiences and they need a reason to go to a place (tourism, commerce)
- A Main Street Program strives to be historically sympathetic to the original building's façade and architectural features – it does not produce a “theme affect”
- Barron County is at risk of becoming too “homogenized” in the way that the big box stores and national chains can make any town look just like another one.

3. To preserve the values and cultural practices of the society

- Its our history, its where we come from
- Barron County has a rich history of Ethnic Diversity- preserve the rich heritage of ethnic diversity and actively encourage ethnic diversity in the future and recognize it as an opportunity to attract tourists and visitors
- Each municipality in Barron County is unique: landscape, ethnic heritage, commerce, resources, and products. This should be preserved and celebrated for the fullest benefit economically, socially, and culturally.
- Future generations need to know
- We are a product of our background
- Learn from the past to better prepare for the future
- Brings generations together
- Its important to know who lived here generations ago, even 10,000 years ago- The Mound Builders, the Sioux, and the Ojibwa, and the White people
- Should preserve how natives lived to connect to the past to honor what got us to this point
- It is important to preserve the stories related to the development of Barron County
- There should be education in local schools on the history of Barron County
- Attractive signage and banners are important – can be a way to celebrate culture
- Barron County keeps genealogical records at the UW Stout Archives, they should be kept at the County level, and be useable all year long
- The Blue Hills Geological Society conducts a Preservation Project where they take photos of tombstones and graveyards for the sake of preservation. They will go back a year latter and find that a tombstone has already eroded beyond legibility.

4. To create more opportunities for the success of one municipality to be mutually beneficial for the success of others

- Barron County needs leadership amongst the municipalities over the next twenty years to preserve historic and architectural significance, but also to move forward.
 - Maybe there is an opportunity to create more leadership through the schools- bridging a gap between schools and the communities – leaders for the future
 - There should be a “Cultural Sensitivity” Sessions/Classes for the Police Department on all of the sub-cultures that are now present in BC.
- The County should better develop tourism opportunities – it is weak as a whole. The preservation of the uniqueness of each municipality is a strength that should be developed more.
- Barron County's Economic Diversity is its strength; we should preserve it and strive for more economic diversity.
- Barron County's Economic Diversity can also be a weakness because there is no unity, nothing that ties the county together
- Barron County needs to co-exist with National Retail Chains
 - Is there a way to not have commercial districts look like they can be anywhere in the country? We should preserve a look that is unique to Barron County

- Things to celebrate and promote: Wild Rice and its impact on the area. Logging and its impact on the area, the Pipestone Quarry and its significant to the Native American Culture.
 - All efforts at establishing recreational opportunities near the Pipestone Quarry have failed due to vandalism. There is an opportunity here to create a sense of ownership.
- There should be a County wide activity or Festival (The County Fair can do a better job of promoting the County and its diversity)
 - There was a suggestion to start a Spring Planting Festival and a Fall Harvest Festival near the site of the quarry to honor and celebrate the Sioux and Ojibwa Cultures. The County should do something with the Pipestone Quarry.
 - Pioneer Village celebrates Heritage Days the second week in July
 - The cost to move buildings to Pioneer Village is high
 - The timing of the small town festivals throughout the summer is very good. They bring people to the County all summer long.
 - All volunteer driven, might be difficult to get volunteers for a County wide event
The Boy Scouts in Chetek organized last years Air Show- it was the most successful one ever, they received an award of recognition

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- Barron County in general needs to embrace difference and be open to new possibilities
- Explore a revenue stream to fund arts and culture
 - Room tax
 - Lake Protection and preservation
 - Resort Tax
 - Explore becoming a Premier Resort County
- There is an opportunity to promote “Green” philosophies, life styles and technologies

The following is a compilation of feedback from the 13 individuals that attended the Economic Development Focus Meeting held on March 19, 2009. Their affiliations include: the Realtors® Association of Northwestern Wisconsin, Workforce Resource, Chetek Chamber of Commerce, Lakeland Farm Supply Co-op, Barron County Board of Supervisors, Rice Lake Main Street, Lakeview Medical, Cumberland Memorial Hospital, Agstar Financial Services, Rice Lake Economic Development Corporation, UW-Barron County, Rice Lake School District; the Barron County Human Resource Director, and a City of Chetek small business owner.

Andrew Dane, UW-Extension Community Development Agent, facilitated an open discussion among the invited group of stakeholders by asking probing questions and allowing everyone an opportunity to express their opinions.

WHAT IS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT?

- Increasing economic activity while sustaining a high quality of life
 - attracting traditional business activities that will pay reasonable salaries and help to increase tax base
- Sustainably planned growth that doesn't compromise what the city stands for; it's about moving forward not stagnating
- Partnering with Education and Industry to develop a workforce that is local and can sustain the development
- Jobs
 - Changing to keep up with the times to attract businesses and to provide good paying jobs
 - Providing jobs for a wide spectrum of skills
 - Creating the atmosphere for higher paying jobs and advanced degree jobs; in this way the rest of the economy will follow and benefit
- Providing amenities that contribute to the quality of life (restaurants, hospitals, shopping)
- Fluidity, meaning keeping up with the times and adapting to change
- Creating an economic environment which attracts and retains a young workforce
- Providing a living wage

WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES/LIMITS OF BARRON COUNTY AS A WHOLE?

Mind-Set

- Lack of thought sharing within communities and across communities
- each community is acting alone, working together or cooperatively can provide stability
- Lack of communication between municipalities
- Lack of collaboration among Barron County as a whole
- There is no forum or structure to work together
- Schools, businesses, organizations are all working individually no collaboration
- A "Not-in-my-back yard" mentality
- The county as a whole is still in the manufacturing mind-set; we will likely need to change what our major industries are
- Lack of a Tourism and Parks/Recreation Departments (only county in the area that does not have one)
- The number of students not graduating from high school
- The County is losing prime agriculture and forest land

Location

- We are not the North Woods or an extension of the Twin Cities or Eau Claire
- The rural character can be a weakness
- The over-all low socio-economic income holds back amenities and services
- The County competes with Eau Claire and Duluth for workforce and students
- We do not have a sense of how we fit into the region (or the regional economy), or what region we belong to – what is our "brand".
- We need to identify where are we going to have the best chance for success to bring in new enterprises
- Distance from I-94 corridor makes it harder to attract manufacturing businesses

- Competition against time and financing capability of larger communities- no resources to chase business development
- There are very few alternatives to driving a car locally or regionally
- The lack of high speed internet in some rural areas of the county

Image

- With the influx of national chain businesses, Rice Lake is starting to look like any city in America
- County as a whole has diversity issues to solve- keeps younger professionals away
- Not embracing diversity, and not having much ethnic diversity
- The fact that we do not know what our strengths are is a weakness

External Forces

- The rising cost of health care
- Lacking financial resources to bring businesses in

WHAT ARE THE THREATS FACING BARRON COUNTY 5-10 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE?

Costs of goods and services

- The rising costs of energy and bringing people and products into and out of the county
- Budget cuts at schools and within the local, state and national government
- Basic input cost to farmers have risen enormously over the last year
- Cost of Health Care for self employed and small business owner
- Small businesses closing (every few months a business closes in Chetek)

Local and global demographics

- The aging society and changing demographics
- Many of the volunteers in the service organizations are senior citizens
- Global demographics changes- India has a population of 150 million people ages 5- 15, this will change the competition for jobs on a global scale
- The decreasing enrollment at primary and secondary schools will impact Health Care
- Immigrants are changing the ethnic demographics

Lack of highly skilled workforce such as CEO's, CFO's, Plant Maintenance People

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF BARRON COUNTY AS A WHOLE?

Schools

- Good schools that are willing to adapt to new methods and technologies such as alternative educational deliveries

Economically diverse

- Growth of the health care industry
- A strong health care system that is getting better

Natural Resources

- Natural resources, lakes, potential to develop for tourism
- The recreational opportunities in the area- fishing, cross country skiing, golf courses
- The location in terms of Twin Cities residents coming to our County for recreation

Location

- Close to Eau Claire and Twin Cities, access to other cultural events
- Access to Hwy 53

Quality of Life

- Public Safety and low crime rate
- No traffic problems or slow downs
- The variety of local cultural and arts events

Infrastructure/Workforce

- The mind-set that “we can have it all” – beautiful natural resources, commerce, good transportation
- Our good work ethic is coveted around the county
- The Rice Lake Airport
- Rail
- A young professionals group has started in Rice Lake
- Local financial institutions have ethics

Community Involvement

- The Ag Promoters are bringing Farm Technology Days 2012 to the county (an annual state wide event that brings in thousands of people) It hasn't been in BC for 20 years
- There are strong service organizations, non-profits, and volunteerism – strong local pride
- Strong local sustainability groups are forming

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES OR TYPES OF BUSINESSES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IN BARRON COUNTY?**Sustainability Approaches**

- The Natural Step and Green approach to development and bringing back the level of natural resources
- To the County should adopted a sustainability mission statement or sustainability resolution
- alternative energy, renewable fuels, ethanol, wind

Business Retention and Expansion

- Keep our agriculture economy strong -adapt and grow along with the trends
- Agriculture support businesses such as Seneca Foods- it gives farmers a chance to sell a different crop
- Value added agriculture opportunities
- Support downtown development and revitalization
- Renovate/upgrade existing buildings, preserve keeping historic structures

Telecommunication Industries

- Call Centers
- Companies that are headquartered somewhere else, but can have local employees that telecommute
- Knowledge- based businesses
- Businesses that allow employees to telecommute as well as those whose structure is for their employees to telecommute from home

Expand and Develop Tourism

- Utilize natural resources– have more tourism destinations
- More things for kids to do such as hiking biking trails or a water park
- Preserve and develop more family owned resorts that have weekly rentals

Miscellaneous

- Affirmative Industries that provide jobs for the differently abled population
- Frac Sand mines

GREEN INDUSTRIES/Clean Tech:

- The county should lead by example and provide incentives for “green” businesses to locate here

- Identify and remove “disincentives”
- Education to support green industries
- It’s a new industry full of potential – take advantage of local, state, and federal funding

HEALTH CARE CLUSTER:

- There is a framework for cooperation, collaboration and competition in Rice Lake within the health care industry
- What /how can the County learn from the growth of Health Care Industry/Cluster to adapt to other industries?

AGRICULTURE:

- Needs to attract young farmers
- There is an opportunity around cap and trade and carbon credits
- Promote small scale renewable energy within a community or adjoining farms
- The local foods movement and direct marketing
- Agri-Tourism – promote what we have

TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRIES:

- Need infrastructure for wide broad ban access
- High Speed Internet is available through much of the rural areas of the County – promote this to companies who need or encourage employees to work from home.

TOURISM:

- Market what we have- and ask the question “what else do we need?”
- Regional marketing– explore cooperative marketing strategies. it is more effective to think “we” not “me”
- Opportunity to partner with Job Training Centers and schools to train youth for the tourism industry and customer relations – value added selling
- There should be a commitment from the county to support tourism
- Outdoor recreational activities and the tourism industry may be the best fit
- Create a Tourism Department
- Banning smoking in the public realm could bring more tourists

The following is a compilation of feedback from the 13 individuals that attended the Housing Focus Meeting held on January 5, 2009. They represented the following affiliations: USDA Rural Development, Barron County Housing Commission, City of Chetek Housing Authority, Barron County Department of Health and Human Services, City of Cumberland Housing Authority, Barron County Board of Supervisors, UMOS, Habitat for Humanity, Barron County Housing Authority, Impact Seven, and WestCap.

The purpose of the meeting was to identify the issues related to housing in Barron County and to begin to draft goals and objectives for the Housing Element of the Barron County Comprehensive Plan.

EDUCATION/CLEARING HOUSE

- Educate People on what programs are available to them for housing assistance
- Educate public as to what home repair assistance is available (*possibly work with Utility Companies to provide education on weatherization*)
- WestCap has foreclosure prevention and education classes they also work with the home owner so that their credit rating can stay solvent even if they go into foreclosure.
- Where can families in need go to find programs and assistance for family housing? There should be one place for them to go. Currently they are referred to other agencies or programs to find the one that suits them best.
- We need to address “financial literacy” because most of the people that seek out programs for housing assistance do not know how to budget their money, or to prioritize their purchases.
- There needs to be more public acceptance of multi-unit housing, there are currently misconceptions about how they fit into neighborhoods.

ELDERLY ASSISTED LIVING

- Housing is needed for the growing elderly population
- Baby boomers will need more housing than what is available.
- Federal housing programs do not offer funding for new subsidized housing units and the current stock is aging (35+ years)
- USDA Rural Development funds assisted living facilities and partners with non-profits & private companies to develop assisted living facilities.

FARM/ MIGRANT POPULATION

- With the growth of agriculture and food processing industry in Barron County what will the future need be for farm labor/ processing workers housing in the coming years?
- There is a seasonal need for migrant housing
- UMOS has the results from the Migrant Worker Housing Analysis; it contains recommendations for needed migrant and food laborer housing.
- Criteria for 514 Loans and 516 Grants now include food processing laborers. These loans and grants can be used to develop new housing or to purchase existing housing. UMOS would like a non-profit or a private company to apply for the money with the goal of providing housing for food processing workers.

FORECLOSURES/ HOUSING NEEDS

- Foreclosed Properties have an impact on neighborhoods and the economy
- Pockets of areas within Barron County are at high risk for foreclosures
- Currently there are pockets of areas within Barron County that have high foreclosure rates.
- Catholic Charities out of Superior have been in Barron County to help with the Foreclosure issue.

- The increase in Barron County of foreclosed homes is due to the subprime loans, WestCap expects to see higher instances of foreclosures over the next 3 years and then taper off.
 - According to USDA Rural Development, the rate of foreclosed properties has stayed consistent within the last 10 years.
- Vacancy Rates are inconsistent throughout the County
- Credit Issues effect peoples ability to secure housing

HOME REPAIR

- Repair of existing houses is needed

RURAL CHARACTER

- Limit the number and size of seasonal housing
- We should restrict housing in rural and forested areas.

EMERGENCY HOUSING

- Foreclosures create homelessness
- Housing for homeless youth is needed in Barron County
- There is a Homelessness problem in Barron County
- There is no Homeless Shelter in Barron County, yet the need exists for one. A group of people are meeting on Jan. 14th to address the need.
- UMOS distributed \$36,000 last year for homeless people to stay at Motels. Most of those people were Barron County residents
- Clergy Associations ran out of money and needed to tap into UMOS's money.
- There are 3 Homes for Battered women and they are all full. Women who need shelter are transported to Eau Claire or other counties.
- Emergency Housing is needed
- Transitional Housing for victims of domestic violence is needed
- The problem of homelessness is partially related to economic development and lack of family supportive jobs.
- The problem of homelessness is also related to alcohol and drug addiction. There is no facility in Barron County to help rehabilitate these people, such as a half-way house.

HOME OWNERSHIP/ AFFORDABILITY

- Highly energy efficient housing is needed because the utility costs for these homes are more affordable. Solar powered and well insulated were suggested.
- For medium to higher cost homes, we need more jobs available in Barron County to keep our younger, upcoming citizens here.
- Newly constructed affordable housing is needed
- Some of the criteria to be accepted into housing assistance programs are too strict, they often leaves out the people who most need it.

The following is a compilation of feedback from the 16 individuals that attended the Natural Resources Focus Meeting held on February 11, 2009. Their affiliations and job titles include: Barron County Conservationist, Geologist with Cooper Engineering, DNR Forester, a retired farmer, DNR Fisheries, Woodland Association member, Wisconsin DNR Wildlife Biologist, Barron County Land Information Office, District Conservationist, Barron County Trail Coordinator, a farmer, a Hydrologist with Cooper Engineering, Barron County Soil Conservation Technician, a member of Desair Lake Restoration, Inc., a County Board Supervisor, and the Western Field Representative of the Ice Age Trail.

Andrew Dane, UW-Extension Community Development Agent, facilitated an open discussion among the invited group of stakeholders by asking probing questions and allowing everyone an opportunity to express their opinions.

The headings below are the main issues that were identified and the bullet points go more into detail.

SOIL EROSION

- there has been a 3" loss of top soil in the last 50 years
- agricultural land that has been tilled of all vegetation is most likely to lose top soil during a heavy rain
- soil sedimentation can be seen in local rivers after a heavy rain
- erosion results in loss of nutrients into soil
- clear cutting forests and woodlands can result in erosion
- Sheet, rill and gulley erosion is a threat to water quality

QUALITY OF LAKES, STREAMS, RIVERS, WETLANDS, AND GROUNDWATER

- Barron County does not have a Bench Mark that establishes the depth of ground water, one is needed
- Unsuccessful Manure Management results in manure run-off, especially after heavy rains, and unseasonal/unexpected rain events
- Red Cedar River and Desair Lake are on the WI DNR 2002 Impaired Waters list
- Desair Lake has major storm run-off problems because watershed is steep
- Premature eutrophication (a natural process in aging lakes resulting in a build-up of plant nutrients) from run-off
- Lake shore erosion
- buffer systems are being lost
- loss of riparian corridor along lakes, rivers, and streams (interface between land and the water; plant roots help against erosion; creates an ecosystem; can be natural or *engineered*)
- The riparian corridor is being fragmented due to development
- Degradation of the riparian corridor leads to a loss of near shore habitat (the shallow Literal Zone along lakes, rivers 0'-5' deep)

UNCONTROLLED GRAZING

- Livestock having uncontrolled access to stream areas for grazing is causing erosion of shorelines and effects water quality

UNCONTROLLED DEVELOPMENT

- Potential loss of water quantity in the aquifers if too many wells and septic systems are allowed in close proximity
- An increase in irrigation can lead to a water quantity problem
- Excess of impervious services can lead to a loss of recharging to the ground water
- Could lead to a loss of non-metallic mining opportunities; gravel is a natural resource that adds to the County's revenue
- Fragmentation of Forests is happening 5 – 10 acres at a time due to residential and commercial development.

- Wildlife Management Practices are made difficult when forests and woodlands are parceled into small areas with no access.
- Is causing a Fragmentation of River Corridors, Red Cedar River is at risk of further fragmentation
- Fragmentation of shoreline is detrimental to Wildlife habitat and population. Riparian area from waters edge to 100 yards into the upland is needed
- Wetlands are threatened when development is too close. A Wetland needs more than 200' of undisturbed land around it to maintain the wildlife habitat
- With the addition of more and more lights in commercial areas and billboards with up-turned lights there is a reduction of Night Sky Viewing

INVASIVE SPECIES

- Are a threat to lakes, native plants, and wildlife in Barron County
- There is no real mechanism in place to monitor or reduce the proliferation
- Aquatic Invasive Species have been seen in Barron County Lakes: Eurasian Milfoil and Rusty Cray Fish
- Terrestrial Invasive Species have been identified: Purple Loosestrife, Eurasian Honeysuckle, Buckthorn, Spotted Knapweed (produces toxins that keep other plants from growing, increasing potential for erosion), Garlic Mustard, Leafy Spurge (livestock will not graze or eat hay that has this Leafy Spurge in it), Japanese Knotweed (can grow through asphalt)

TAX STRUCTURE

- Farmland Use Value Assessment is contributing to more land being used for grazing. Woodlots and streams are being degraded by excessive grazing.
- The performance standard by state is not preventive enough – needs to go further

CLIMATE CHANGE

- are producing heavier rain incidents resulting in flooding and erosion

RECREATION

- The County should have a 3-5 year Recreation Plan
- Southern part of County has underutilized trout streams
- Expand access and parking on the more high quality lakes(i.e. Red Cedar Lake)
- More Disabled Access to lakes
- More Public Land for hunting and enjoying wildlife (5% of land in BC is Public Land)
- The spread of invasive aquatic species can increase if boaters do not take proper precautions
- There is a lack of public education on using and protecting natural resources, and proper behavior when using recreational facilities
- Barron County owns lots along Red Cedar Lake can these be used for lake access?
- The western sky getting too light for night sky viewing (star gazing)

On January 14, 2009 Andrew Dane, UW- Extension Community Development Agent, facilitated a Transportation Focus Meeting of stakeholders related to transportation in Barron County. The purpose of the meeting was to identify the issues related to transportation in Barron County and to begin to draft goals and objectives for the Transportation Element of the Barron County Comprehensive Plan. Fifteen persons were in attendance representing the following stakeholder groups: West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Wild Rivers Trail Commission, Barron County Trails Coordinator, City of Barron, Prairie Farm School District, Barron County Office of Aging, West Wisconsin Railroad Transit Authority, Barron County Board of Supervisors, Highway Safety Commission, Highway Commissioner, Barron County Highway Committee Cumberland Municipal Airport, Cameron School District, Ice Age Trail, and the Rice Lake Airport.

What they liked BEST about Transportation in Barron County:

- The snow is kept plowed, highways and roads are well maintained, most roads are paved
- Cities and Towns have a good working relationship with the County
- Good connectivity of roads
- Arterials, collectors and local roads plus a Rustic Road System
- The airports are good for the population base
- There are several kinds of walking and hiking trails
- 300 miles of snowmobile trails
- The Cross-county and snowshoe trail systems in Cumberland and Barron
- We still have a rail line
- Medical helicopter based in the county (Rice Lake Regional Airport)
- Barron County has an elderly transportation system in place
- No traffic problems
- Highways 8 & 53 provide for adequate transportation of goods throughout the county
- There is a good and safe student bus system of throughout the county
- Chetek has a Safe Routes for Schools Program; Rice Lake is working on implementing one; The City of Barron applied in 2008

What they liked LEAST about Transportation in Barron County:

- Limited public transportation
- Funding restrictions can interfere with ability of agencies and institutions cooperating with each other
- No substantially connected bike paths that are safe
- The shoulders on the roads do not accommodate for bicycle safety
- The maintenance of roads is costly
- The weight and size limits for trucks keeps going up
- There are too many trucks on the roads
- The size of the farm machinery that are on the roads
- There are not enough bike trails
- There are not enough ATV trails
- The ignorance and lack of common sense of some ATV drivers
- The Ice Age Trail is not complete
- There are pedestrian safety issues in the city of Barron
- The Hwy 8 Corridor expansion problems
- Traffic Safety issues on Hwy SS, intersections of Hwy V & 53, Hwy 8 & O, and Hwy 8 & K
- More Roundabouts are needed
- Education is needed on how to use Roundabouts
- Lack of a central dispatcher to coordinate transportation services
- The Transit Services that are provided should be better coordinated so that the vehicles are used more efficiently
- The number of alcohol related vehicle accidents
- The punishment for DUIs is not sufficient since there are people with multiple DUIs

Aspects that can be improved:

- Education for public on: ATV use, roundabout use, alcohol and driving
- The Rail System
- Getting more funding to improve the roads
- Transfer of funding is possible, sharing and coordinating can cut costs
- Coordinating Elderly Transport
- Creating the position for a county wide transportation services
- coordinator and dispatcher
- Better Inter-Connectivity and getting people to where they need to go
- Public Transportation Coordination with School Bus Service

Emerging Issues:

- Aging Population
- Regional Transportation Coordinating Committee/ Regional Mobility Manager
- Possibility of joining with Namekagon Public Transit Authority to provide public transit in Barron County

The following is a compilation of feedback from the Utilities and Community Facilities Focus Meeting held on March 4, 2009. Andrew Dane, UW-Extension Community Development Agent, facilitated an open discussion among the invited group of stakeholders by asking what issues they foresee coming up and what opportunities there are to address them. Eleven people were in attendance representing the following stakeholder groups: Xcel Energy, Barron Electric, Barron County Waste to Energy Facility, Rice Lake Utilities, Barron School District, Barron County Emergency Management, Barron County Sherriff's Department, Barron County Libraries, the City of Chetek, and UW- Barron County.

Utilities Companies

Barron Electric: It is a challenge to keep utility rates at a decent point. More customers than usual are having problems paying their bills; for those who are within the poverty level there is a program to assist them, but there is no program for those who have recently lost their jobs and are having difficulty paying their bills. Collections are increasing.

Xcel Energy: Looking into different types of alternative energies to add to their power supply portfolio. One in Ashland will be using the waste from a Forestry Refugee to be used in the wood fired boilers –They also have some hydro electricity in their portfolio. The rising costs of utilities are an issue.

Child Care

- There is a growing need for child care for students and staff at UW-Barron County
 - Chetek School District Offers Child Care
 - Could West-Cap provide Child Care within their residences for UW- Barron County Students

Stormwater Management

- There are a lot of issues surrounding Stormwater Management in Rice Lake and surrounding areas
 - The DNR has increased the standards on their Best Management Practice for Stormwater Management that limit suspended solids and reduce phosphorous loads to sewer systems – Total Daily Loads (TDL)
 - There will likely be a change in the criteria to become a Stormwater Utility in regards to lowering the population requirement
 - The City of Chetek has enacted a Stormwater Utility
- UW-Barron County has installed a rain garden to demonstrate how it can mitigate run-off
 - The Rain Garden is used as a teaching tool in the Botany and Environmental Biology Classes and will be the focus of a Lecture 100 class that will include a service learning project for the students with a community outreach component where the students will help to install rain gardens in the community.

Schools

Schools have been having a difficult time budgeting for some time now, but it is getting worse. Last 15 years schools have been using a funding formula that puts a cap on the revenue of a 2.8% revenue increase, however cost of living such as utilities, and insurances, are rising at a 4% increase. The Barron School District has been cutting \$400,000 – \$800,000 a year out of their budget. It is a challenge just keeping the schools afloat. Utilities are a big part of the cost of running a school. The wood burning boiler that is shared by the BACC, the High School, the Nursing Home and the Hospital, has reduced the utility costs. This year they will be able to cool the building with the steam from the wood burning boiler.

The School Districts of Chetek and Weyerhaeuser will likely be consolidating this school year due to financial difficulty.

Libraries

All libraries in the County are in old buildings making Utility costs a big issue. With the current budgets that the libraries have it is almost impossible to make any upgrades to the buildings. Libraries need to figure out how to get information to the public in terms of energy assistance, weatherization, funding assistance, etc. Libraries could be a clearing house for information from the Energy Policy Group.

Sheriff's Department

There is a 2 million dollar upgrade being done to the communication tower used for radio communications between first responders, police, fire, and medical. The new tower will get better range, there were previously some dead spots and they should be covered with the new tower. It does not have a reverse 911 capability which is an issue. (A Reverse 911 system delivers outbound notifications.) Has provisions built in for upgrades.

Municipal Utilities (Rice Lake Utilities)

The water that Rice Lake Utilities puts back into the river is cleaner than the water currently in the river. They want to be able to have the effluent from their plant used for other purposes such as: at construction sites that would otherwise use water from a hydrant; watering down race track; dust control. This non-potable water can be used for irrigation and watering gardens, golf courses, parks, etc.

Waste to Energy Plant

- They have a Mercury Reduction Plan but have not done anything with it
- They are doing a \$2.5 million dollar upgrade to the plant so that they can condense steam
- Need more entities to purchase their power

Renewable Energy

- Waste to energy plant should create more energy
- Transmission of power from renewable sources is difficult
- siting is an issue
- A grant writing clearing house is needed for potential renewable energy projects
- Community digesters are being considered, and have relevant rural applications
- Licensing a Hydro facility is difficult
- UW- Barron County will be doing a Wind Energy Study on campus. Jim Connell, Physics Instructor, along with students, will use an anemometer to measure the speed of the wind on a ridge above the parking lot; students at WITC will build an instrument shelter. This is Phase I and will take 2 years, Phase II is to train students to measure wind, analyze data to locate suitable sites for turbines, and training on proper Wind Turbine maintenance.
- Not enough wind in Barron County for a Wind Farm- individual systems could work
- Potential sources of renewable energy in Barron County are: bio mass, waste energy, digesters, (especially community digesters) wood waste, and geothermal.
- Renewable Energy projects in Wisconsin are competing with cheap hydro and wind from bordering states.
- Xcel Energy is investing in a Smart Grid in Golden Colorado; they do not expect any Smart Grid technologies to be in Barron County within the next 15 years. (A **smart grid** delivers electricity from suppliers to consumers using digital technology to save energy, reduce cost and increase reliability)

Water Quality of Red Cedar River

- TMDL - Total Maximum Daily Load allowed to meet water quality standards by EPA - phosphorous reaches this TMDL limit
- Agricultural practices produce more phosphorous loading than all the municipalities together
- Leachate from landfills has a high ammonia concentration – Rice Lake Utilities is spending money to filter it.
- Pharmaceutical deposits are found in water.
- The river is considered impaired however the quality changes in different areas (there are points on the river in Barron County where it is better than in Dunn County).

E-Waste (electronic waste)

- Barron County should address the need for recycling and or properly disposing of electronic waste- it is expensive and limited as to what can be done with it.
- WTE is working with Polk County to take Barron County E-Waste, and for Barron County to take Polk County's appliances.
- Wisconsin has not banned e-waste from landfills, although Wisconsin State Senator Miller from the 16th district will introduce an electronics recycling bill on March 10, 2009.

Solid Waste

- Pharmaceuticals are a problem to have in the waste stream mostly because of the mercury content. The WTE plant is a better way to dispose of them than a landfill or flush down a drain or toilet. Nation wide the preferred method is incineration.
- There is a problem with disposing of Insulin left in bottles past expiration date
- The State will not fund a Clean Sweep Program in the new budget. It cost \$36,000 last year to run Barron County's Clean Sweep Program. The County has conducted 4 over the last 8 years. There were 2 main sites and 1 satellite site. Also collected mercury, and pharmaceuticals.
- The County would need to fund a 'Clean Sweep Program'.

Energy Prices/Education

- Global warming and green house gases are issues
- There is a growing need to add renewable energy to the power supply portfolio.
- Utility costs will continue to rise even when more renewable sources are added to the grid
- Energy Conservation is very important for consumers to understand and to practice. It is the only control that they actually have over their utility costs.
- Focus on Energy, which uses public benefits money, offers programs and grants to implement energy conservation and renewable energy projects, residential and governmental consumers should take advantage

Shared Services

- Union contract may raise costs more than save money
- Issues of workers comp and insurance – who will pay for what
- All fire departments have a good mutual aid agreement
- Law enforcement does not have a written mutual aid agreement, however there is a policy that when requested an agency will respond and it becomes the ownership of the requested agency
- All municipal electric utilities in Wisconsin have a mutual aid agreement worked out. But between Rice Lake and Barron and Rice Lake and Cumberland there is not an agreement
- Fire Chiefs would like to see a Mutual Aid Agreement among all Utilities
- Randy Books will be talking with all municipal utilities in Barron to come up with a Mutual Aid Agreement
- Randy Books has coordinated a Mutual Aid Agreement with some villages and townships to provide emergency management
- There is a 5 City Consortium that shares Safety Compliancy Issue Training. (Spooner, Barron, Rice Lake, Chetek, Menomonee and River Falls) Any governmental agency that needs to comply with Comp 32 could join this consortium. There are 5 such consortiums around the state.
- Perhaps there is an opportunity for health care facilities to distribute ambulances around the county and not keep them parked at their facility.
- There is a great opportunity to share resources across jurisdictions such as large machinery. Some townships are already doing this, but during a recent inventory of large equipment throughout the County Randy Books saw several duplicates
- The Fire Departments are doing a good job of sharing equipment.
- At one point the Chetek School District provided childcare