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Tracking Big-Box Developments



Early access to background information is the key to making your voice heard. The Sustaining Communities campaign tracks emerging big-box developments and provides information to the public regarding up-coming land use issues. We track newspaper articles and community group experiences opposing irresponsible big box developments. The information we gather is distributed to the coalition of community groups, lawyers and citizens in a consistent and reliable manner, creating a constant connection to the rest of the state.

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AS OF MAY 18, 2006 MEA IS SERVING AS LEGAL SUPPORT IN THE FOLLOWING COMMUNITIES:

HARTFORD

WAL-MART SUPERCENTER PROPOSED ON WETLANDS NEAR THE RUBICON RIVER.

Despite community dissent, the City of Hartford recently chose to annex and rezone land for a proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter. The Supercenter is awaiting wetland-fill permits from the Department of Natural Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Attached are MEA's comments, on behalf of Hartford Citizens for Responsible Government, which address serious concerns about the project's location and design. The proposal also needs final Plan Commission approval as a conditional use. Hartford Citizens for Responsible Government is working hard to educate the community on the projects many negative impacts.

JEFFERSON

TOWN HELPS COALITION AND CHALLENGES ANNEXATION DECISION.

After being denied access to a city-wide vote regarding the use of impact studies in annexation decisions, Coalition for a Better Jefferson has a new ally—the Town of Jefferson. On March 31, 2006, the town filed suit challenging the City's blind approval of the annexation proposal that would set up a Wal-Mart Supercenter. MEA, who represented the Coalition in their bid to introduce direct legislation that requires impact studies before annexation, remains a source of legal and technical support for the community. The court will hear oral arguments by the Town, City and Wal-Mart on July 31, 2006 at the City of Jefferson Courthouse.

STURGEON BAY

RESIDENTS ADDRESS CLOSED MEETINGS AND QUESTIONABLE USE OF ANNEXATION POWER.

Door County Residents for Fair Enterprise (DCRFE) is working to protect the community from two reoccurring proposals for annexation—one submitted on behalf of Wal-Mart and the other for another suspected big-box development. One of the two annexation proposals is currently moving forward. After negotiating a development agreement in closed session, the City has received Plan Commission recommendation to annex 70 acres for suspected big-box development. DCRFE, with MEA's help, submitted an Open Meetings Law complaint addressing the string of illegal Council and Finance Committee sessions that allowed the City Council to set up the annexation deal without the community's knowledge. Additionally, MEA submitted a letter regarding the legal framework for annexation decisions. DCRFE and MEA are concerned that the City is attempting to annex property for big-box development in opposition to the Comprehensive Plan recommendation and without public involvement.

Recently, DCRFE's hard work has been paying off. The Plan Commission seems to be recognizing the need to protect the community from big-box sprawl. The Commission has begun the task of amending the big-box ordinance to add impact studies and a potential size cap. MEA attended the May 17, 2006 Plan Commission meeting where fiscal impact study

requirements were approved and a size cap received new-found acceptance. The Plan Commission has stated its commitment to the Comprehensive Plan, which discourages big-box development, and will continue its overhaul of the big-box ordinance to address community concerns. DCRFE hopes that that with continued community support the Plan Commission will continue its thoughtful approach and the City Council will hear the message—Plan in the public's interest, follow the Comprehensive Plan and protect Sturgeon Bay from oversized big-box developments!

GREEN BAY

CITY CONSIDERING RE-ZONING LAND TO AID A PROPOSED 4 TH WAL-MART STORE.

On May 22, 2006, the City of Green Bay Plan Commission will vote on a proposal to re-zone property for the city's fourth Wal-Mart! If you are in the area, please attend a rally at 5 pm in front of Green Bay City Hall on May 22, 2006 and voice your opposition at the meeting. As in other communities, the development goes against the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and will be voted on without considering the Supercenter's environmental and economic affect on the community and existing commercial district. MEA is submitting testimony on behalf of local Green Bay residents.

STOUGHTON

STRONG COMMUNITY GROUP AND UP-COMING IMPACT STUDIES WILL HOPEFULLY PROTECT STOUGHTON FROM ANOTHER WAL-MART.

Although a large parcel of land has been annexed and the big-box ordinance size cap altered to allow a proposed Wal-Mart Supercenter, Stoughton Forward has plenty to look forward to. Thanks to the community group's efforts, the Stoughton Big-Box ordinance requires environmental, economic, traffic impact statements before the City can approve a conditional use permit. After viewing the potential impacts, the Plan Commission has the full authority and obligation to deny the proposal if it will be in any way detrimental to the public. Stoughton's process reminds us of the need for impact studies and firm size caps in all big-box ordinances! MEA will continue to aid Stoughton Forward in its efforts to create awareness about the negative effects of adding the community's second Wal-Mart (Stoughton has less than 11,000 people). The City has the responsibility to listen to these concerns and protect the community from uncontrolled sprawl.

ADDITIONALLY...make sure to keep your eye on efforts in Spooner and Minoqua to stop big-box sprawl!!