

Date: March 2, 2011

To: Washington County Commissioners

From the outset, I would like to make it clear that I oppose designating 585 acres in Helvetia as urban reserves.

I would also like to comment on the strategy of aggressive, perpetual growth which seems to be a driving force behind far too many decisions made in this jurisdiction and to further explore the underlying assumption that all growth should be promoted.

Certainly growth has a positive dimension as anyone who has witnessed the birth and development of a child, the blossoming of a tree in preparation for setting fruit, freshly picked or home gardened fruits and vegetables swelling to their mature form. The foregoing examples are manifestations of the generous bounty of this earth and represent a process of growth that has sustained life on this planet since time immemorial. This, view, of course is predicated on having ready access to prime farmland and on providing support and encouragement to those who nurture, honor and tend the soil.

As with all things in the human realm, balance is essential, for there is a point where growth becomes excessive. In this land of abundance, we are often warned of extreme growth; that which is out of proportion to actual need. One example is the obesity epidemic which can lead to diabetes, a disease that is now threatening the health of even young children. In this instance the growth is taken to extremes, when individuals consume well beyond what the body needs for optimal functioning. Diabetes is also associated with eating processed, low nutrient foods rather than fresh picked, locally grown produce.

Cancer is another disease which speaks of an out of control growth process, one that has become pathological. Fortunately with the proper treatment and significant life style changes, people can sometimes survive this devastating illness.

On an environmental level, the literature on climate change has made it very clear that current growth-oriented business as usual and development practices are unsustainable and as such pose a significant threat to the very conditions on this planet that have hitherto sustained human life.

I raise these issues because the Washington County decision making process seems increasingly out of balance in its focus on corporate and industrial growth over the greater good of the community. Sometimes an individual can feel healthy only to learn through an annual check-up or routine testing that a serious disease has entered their system. This can happen as well on a collective level wherein a status quo situation that seems to have maintained itself for many years suddenly and unexpectedly becomes intolerable. We are seeing this played out on the world stage in recent weeks with uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen. Closer to home Wisconsin comes to mind. These situations portend a collective shift. People in mass are demanding that their voices be heard.

Along the same vein, I urge you to listen to the voice of the community; to thoroughly consider your decisions and to carefully analyze both short and long term ramifications and impacts. A paternalistic, top down approach that continues to devalue and marginalize the will of the people in favor of unnecessary and unwarranted expansion is out of step with the common good.

Respectfully Submitted,

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