

**CITY OF GRANT
WASHINGTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA**

RESOLUTION 2009-11

**A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF KEEPING EQUINE OPERATIONS IN
WASHINGTON COUNTY CLASSIFIED AS “AGRICULTURAL,” AND
AGAINST THE COUNTY’S RECLASSIFICATION OF EQUINE BOARDING
AND TRAINING FACILITIES TO “COMMERCIAL”**

WHEREAS, the rural communities of Washington County, in particular the City of Hugo, City of Grant and May Township ("the Communities"), are committed to keeping equine operations as part of the fabric of their communities; and

WHEREAS, elected representatives of the Communities met Monday, April 12, 2009, at the Hugo City Hall and after hearing testimony from citizens in our equine community, and after discussion, agreed to unite against Washington County’s efforts to reclassify equine operations from “Agricultural” to “Commercial” and other non-agricultural classifications such as “Rural Vacant Land” and “Residential”; and

WHEREAS, the Communities, via their Comprehensive Plans and Ordinances, have tried to preserve their rural character by supporting existing farms, including equine farms, and by encouraging that new farms be created, and

WHEREAS, the overwhelming majority of new farms being created within the Communities, and within the County, are equine farms;

WHEREAS, equine operations have, up until now, been treated by the Washington County Department of Assessment as "Agricultural," however that department has now chosen to single out equine boarding and training operations within the County and treat them as "Commercial" for property taxation purposes; and

WHEREAS, the Washington County Department of Planning and Zoning continues to treat equine operations as "Agricultural" and therefore allows accessory buildings of unlimited size on equine operations since the use of such buildings continues to be deemed "Agricultural" by the Department of Planning and Zoning, even as the County Department of Assessment has determined that equine boarding and training operations are no longer "Agricultural" but are now "Commercial;" and

WHEREAS, the basis cited by the County Department of Assessment in determining that equine boarding and training operations are now "Commercial" is that they do not "sell" an "agricultural product" as the County claims is required by Section 273.13 of Minnesota Statutes, yet the very act of "boarding" means the provision of feed, and the state statute cited by the Department of Assessment in its memo lists "forage" as an agricultural product, and thus pasture, as part of the feed provided by the equine boarding

operator in exchange for the boarding fee, meets the statutory requirement of providing an "agricultural product" for "sale" and thus, meets the County Department of Assessment's own test for being an "Agricultural" operation; and

WHEREAS, the Communities recognize the value if equine farms as being the same as most any farm, specifically:

- the preservation of open space by not subdividing
- the husbandry of livestock, the bucolic grazing by that livestock, and the asset that grazing horses are to the very fabric of the Communities
- the use of forages, that is, pasture and hay, to support that livestock
- the return of manure to the soil
- the use of much the same agricultural machinery as any other farm
- the employment of neighborhood youth to do barn work, haying and other farm chores
- the support of the local economy, specifically farriers, feed stores and large animal vets

WHEREAS, equine farms provide advantages that other farms may not provide, specifically:

- the keeping of 100% of the land in grasses and legumes rather than mold board plowing and row crops
- the camaraderie of the horse barn as a community gathering place for horse lovers of all ages and social backgrounds

WHEREAS, the 2008 Federal Farm Bill, for the first time, has separately identified and defined "forages" as a valuable crop to American agricultural, and has allocated federal funds towards forage research; and

WHEREAS, the County Department of Assessment has stated that, by confinement feeding the horses, the haying pastures and selling the hay, and then buying hay from another party, meets the "Agricultural" test, yet such an operation is totally counter to the livestock industry migration from machine harvesting of forages to the "greener" harvesting of forages by the grazing animals themselves, something horses have done forever; and

WHEREAS, the Communities believe all of the above results will negatively impact their rural way of life and further believe that keeping viable equine operations must be supported.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Grant City Council that it strongly urges Washington County to cease its efforts to reclassify the County's equine operations from "Agricultural" to "Commercial" or any other non-agricultural classification, and that any equine operations in the County that were reclassified from "Agricultural" be classified back to "Agricultural."

BY ROLL CALL VOTE OF THE GRANT CITY COUNCIL; Carr AYE; Fogelson AYE; Hinseth AYE; Huber AYE; Potter AYE.

This Resolution is adopted by the Grant City Council this 5th day of May, 2009.

Tom Carr, Mayor

Attest: Kim Points, Clerk