

PLAN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
TOWN OF GRANT
November 5, 2015

Present: Lori Ruess, Nathan Wolosek, Sharon Schwab (Committee members), Kathleen Lee (Secretary)

Absent/Excused: Jim Wendels, Ron Becker, Marty Rutz

No citizens were in attendance.

CALL TO ORDER

Nathan Wolosek assumed the role of chairperson for the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

STATE OF PUBLIC NOTICE

It was stated that the agenda was posted at three posting sites. The agenda is no longer being published in the newspaper [Note: Gannett News will charge for this service now].

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Sharon Schwab to approve the October 15, 2015 minutes, and seconded by Nathan Wolosek. The minutes were approved with unanimous ayes.

Several updates on topics addressed in the minutes were given.

- Kristen Johnson acknowledged that the Portage County Planning and Zoning office has received our request for assistance with updating our Comprehensive Plan. The current plan was approved in 2005. State law requires that plans be updated every ten years. It would be best if we began our 10 year update during this calendar year. A date needs to be set and December was suggested.
- When the J-turn is built at the intersection of Wis 54 and County U, single-lane closures will take place on Wis 54. Delays will also take place on County U. Closures are anticipated to last for 3 weeks. Exact dates for the closures are not know at this time, but anticipated to be late summer of 2016.
- The Portage County public hearing for the Galles property rezone is scheduled for Thursday, November 17 at 5pm in Conference Room 1 & 2 of the County Annex Building (1462 Strongs Avenue in Stevens Point). The request will then be forwarded on to the County Board for a decision at their December 15th meeting.

CITIZEN INPUT

Sharon has received a concern/question from a citizen regarding whether the Town of Grant has ever considered zoning prohibiting center pivot spray irrigation of manure. The citizen is concerned about the air-borne spread of the manure for miles. At this time, co-sponsors are being sought for two bills (LRB-2004 and LRB-3722) related to spraying manure. The bills would give local governments more explicit authority to permit the laying of temporary hoses or placement of permanent in ground pipelines in highway rights-of-way for the purpose of pumping liquid manure.

Nathan has previously researched the topic of spraying liquid manure and found it to be the most environmental method of spreading manure. Manure is placed during the summer based on individual plant/field needs. This provides a more useful application of the nutrients. This approach is better than the less discriminate method of spreading of manure during the winter. Many of those nutrients are lost. Concerns regarding pathogens in air are not warranted. Pivot spray irrigation of manure cannot be used on food consumed by humans. It is used on corn and alfalfa for animal feed. There is a window between

application and when crop can be harvested. Using pivot spray does help avoid damage to roads from the weight of hauling manure. Odor is a legitimate concern.

Wood County is doing a report on spreading manure. No one was aware of any regulations on center pivot spray irrigation of manure by a municipality. This topic needs to be watched and is a possible agenda item for a future meeting.

IMPLEMENTS OF HUSBANDRY (IOH) ORDINANCE

Discussion regarding updating the IOH – Option D ordinance took place. For an update to be in effect for 2016, it must be approved by November 30, 2015.

- The current ordinance, approved in January 2015, was reviewed. It allows weights one (1) percent above those set by the state of Wisconsin and designates town roads on which the IOH may travel.
- In 2015 all permit requests were for exceeding weight limits. None were for exceeding length limits.. The only permits not approved as written were requests to drive on non-designated roads. All requests to exceed weight limits on designated roads were approved. While most of the requests were for weights 10 – 15% above the 23,000 pounds per axel limit, some were for weights 30% above the limit.
- Nathan questioned the need for farmers to invest time to complete a permit application and the town chairperson to invest time to review the applications, if none are denied for traveling on designated roads. Could an ordinance be developed and approved that only required a permit application if the farmer wished to travel on undesignated roads? Do we need to adopt Option D if we are not declining applications based on weight?
- Sharon stated requiring permits did provide the town information about the amount of weight traveling on the town roads.
- The town map highlighting designated roads has been highly appreciated by those completing permit applications.
- A 10% override is 25,300 pounds and a 13% override is 26,000 pounds per axle. Most of the requests were for weights of 26,000 pounds or less. Nathan was in support of wording the ordinance to allow the highest weight limit approved this year or to minimally allow a 15% override.

A motion by Sharon Schwab to update the IOH Option D Ordinance to state “maximum gross weight limits established under Sec. 348.15 (3)(g) may be exceeded by 10% over the gross weight limits.” The motion passed with 2 ayes and 1 nay.

A hearing should be scheduled for November 23rd (the date for the town’s budget hearing). Kathy will send a copy of the updated Option D Ordinance to Clerk Vicky Zimmerman. She will also call Vicky to request a notice similar to the one utilized in January 2015 be published.

A question that was proposed in December 2014 was introduced again. Has Portage County directed growers to travel on designated town roads as an alternative to traveling on county roads? Sharon will attempt to get the question answered.

ANGLE DRIVE/BIRCH STREET INTERSECTION

No follow up has occurred since last December regarding the Angle Drive/Birch Street intersection. Currently there is no sign on Angle Drive, while a stop sign exists on Birch Street. Previously, a yield existed on Angle Drive.

Action: Add to agenda for next meeting and then forward a recommendation to the board.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Work continued on Farmland Preservation with a focus on the T. of Grant's Exclusive Ag zoning district.

- The maps forwarded by the Portage County Farmland Preservation Ad-hoc Committee were reviewed. Concerns were expressed. The "Draft Farmland Preservation Area" included a large percentage of the land in the town including areas currently zoned high density residential. Much of the land on the draft should not be designated as Farmland Preservation.
- According to the draft map and to minutes of the ad-hoc committee, conservancy land has been added to Farm Preservation. Most of that land is state-owned. Those privately owned are managed by the State for purposes of conservation. As such, there may be no one eligible for the tax credit. None of the plan commission members in attendance spoke in support of including the conservancy land in Farmland Preservation.
- Nathan proposed a revised map for discussion at the next meeting. This would add several 40 acre blocks primarily at the southern end of the town to the current Exclusive Ag land.
- Portage County is using different verbiage than the Town of Grant used in the zoning ordinance. Exclusive Agriculture is called "enterprise agriculture" and Transitional Agriculture is called "intermediate agriculture." As the Plan Commission continues to update the zoning ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan, the preferred verbiage should be determined.
- Nathan posed a question regarding if it is better to have a map reflect more precisely the land use with a resulting checkerboard appearance or should non-conforming use permits be used for constructing residences in an agriculture area while providing a more uniform appearance to the map. The latter was viewed as preferred approach.
- The Plan Commission's initial tactic was to designate only Exclusive Ag as Farmland Preservation land and not Transitional Ag. It is not known if there are farmers in Transitional Ag that would be interested in applying for the tax credits associated with Farmland Preservation.
- It was deemed important to accurately identify Farmland Preservation areas to avoid the need to rezone land out of Farmland Preservation according to Wis State Statute 91.48.

Utilizing the feedback from Scott Karel, the A- Exclusive Agriculture District was reviewed.

- The phrase "that qualifies as 'a farm residence' under Wisconsin State Statute 91.01(1)" was added to Permitted Uses, 1 and 2, regarding single family residences.
- The phrase "must meet Wisconsin State Statute 91.01(1)" was added to permitted use #10 regarding noncommercial stables. Section 91.01(1) of the statute provides a definition of "accessory use." The explanation of a paddock was removed from this permitted use item.
- "Must meet Wisconsin State Statute 91.01(1)" was added to permitted use #14 regarding roadside stands
- The recommended phrase "Any excavations and/or extractions must be tied to an agricultural use" was added to permitted use #16 regarding excavations. Nathan questioned if this would prevent using soil to elevate the area a residence is to be placed. This is a question that should be forwarded to Scott Karel.

"Conditional Uses" for Exclusive Ag/Farmland Preservation will be discussed at the next meeting. There are several questions that need to be answered. The property to be designated as Farmland Preservation should also be finalized. Irrigated land and cranberry land should be included, but should other land be included? Should the Town have a stand-alone ordinance for Farmland Preservation or should "Exclusive Agriculture" from the Zoning Ordinance be used to address Farmland Preservation? Are property owners restricted by the Statute 91 if the property is in a designated area, but the owner is not applying for tax credits?

POSSIBLE AGENDA ITEMS FOR NOVEMBER 18 MEETING

CUP – Klafka

CUP – Slusser

Farmland Preservation

Spray irrigation of manure

Angle Drive/Birch Street intersection

Determine if the Plan Commission will have an extra meeting in December

Set a date to work with Kristen Johnson on the Comprehensive Plan

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Kathleen D. Lee