

Town of Gnesen Planning Commission
January 19, 2022 Minutes – held both in person and via zoom

Members Present: Kathy Buran Acting As Chair, Carter Williams (via zoom), Pete Bergman, Sherri Underthun, Matt Thibodeau (via zoom), Nick Lepak (via zoom), Kevin Middleton, Joe Ferguson (via zoom), Dick Delano (via zoom), Nathan Horyza, Zoning Officer; and Sarah Blix, Planning and Zoning Secretary.

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Dave Opack (via zoom), Jay Haller, Marcia Haller

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: A motion was made by Pete to approve the agenda, second by Kevin. All vote in favor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Sherri to approve the December 15, 2021 minutes, second by Kathy. All vote in favor.

PUBLIC DISCUSSION: None

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Chad B. Building Violation on Abbott Road: Nathan let the Commission know that Chad did pay the building violation fee so no further action is necessary.

Ordinance Changes: Currently multi-unit dwellings, only duplexes, are allowed in rural residential, suburban residential, waterfront 2 and 3 but not permitted in waterfront 1.

Special Events: Sherri provided the commission with another sample draft application. Nick made a motion to table this topic for another month to allow the other commission members a chance to compare the different sample applications, second by Joe. All vote in favor.

Moratorium Subcommittee: The subcommittee, which consists of Sherri Underthun, Joe Ferguson, Jon Nelson, Tim Cernohous, and Jack Singler, has met and created a telecommunications ordinance draft. Sherri said the draft they created is very clear and covers Gnesen Township's intent and purpose which is laid out in our comprehensive plan. Sherri said it was suggested that they bring the documents that they drafted to the March Annual Meeting so that it does not have to go through a public hearing. Carter questioned if there was verbiage included that regulated how many communication towers were allowed to be erected so that one area did not get a high concentration of them. Sherri said that there was not specific verbiage but that the conditional use permit would allow the township to regulate that. Sherri stated that Joe Ferguson would be fine tuning the draft and then it would be sent to all commission members before the February meeting so that they could have a chance to look it over.

Complaint on Datka Road: Nathan stated that he did get ahold of Ryan Underthun who said that he does not believe any of the vehicles on the property are unlicensed but would get back to Nathan. Nathan said if the vehicles are licensed then the township cannot do anything about them. Kathy asked about the land that was cleared. Nathan said he asked Ryan about that and Ryan did say that he had given the person renting his property permission to clear some trees. Nathan said that it does appear that the renter encroached on the neighboring property when clearing the trees but since there have been no complaints from the neighbor there is nothing that the township can do at this time.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commission Members Who's Terms are up in March: Nick Lepak said he is unable to continue on the board so therefore will not be asking to be reappointed for another term. Both Carter and Pete stated that they are unsure whether they would like to be reappointed for another term and asked for this to be tabled until next month to allow them more time to think about it.

Concerns from Sunshine Lake Residents: Nathan let the planning commission know that several residents from the Sunshine Lake area attended the comp plan public hearing with concerns regarding hot mix plants and short term rentals. Nathan said that the ordinance does already address hot mix plants and they are regulated through the conditional use process. Nathan said that as for short term rentals, there is nothing in the Gnesen ordinance currently that addresses them. Nathan said that St. Louis County has adopted language to address them. Nathan said that Gnesen does not need to do anything about short term rentals if they choose not to, however that he felt like the Town Board would like it addressed to some degree. Nathan said he does receive a lot of calls asking what regulations Gnesen Township has for short term rentals and he is informing people that if they purchase a home in Gnesen and rent it out more than 50% that then it is considered a home business. Nathan said that he received two calls recently about the lot where Boondocks was located. He said that both calls were from people who were inquiring about converting Boondocks into a multi-unit short term rental. Nathan said that the Planning and Zoning Board should address the issue of short term rentals so that he has a better response to give people when they call. Kathy asked if we had a timeline for making ordinance changes. Sarah said that we don't have a set timeline for completing changes, however Nathan needs better guidance on some things such as short term rentals so making the ordinance changes sooner would be beneficial.

Special Events Fee: The current fee is set at \$40 and it was questioned if this fee is enough to cover town costs. Sherri said that while researching special events it seemed like \$75 was a standard fee. Sherri asked if this topic could be tabled and added with the special events to discuss more next month. Kathy agreed and this will be discussed in February.

Ordinance verbiage regarding cell towers, wind farms, and solar farms: Sherri said that as the Moratorium subcommittee was working on the communication tower issue they can across verbiage that dealt with solar farms and wind farms. Sherri said she was wondering if the commission wanted the subcommittee to also draft up some ordinance verbiage similar to the communication tower verbiage dealing with solar and wind farms. Nathan said that solar farms are actually already addressed in the ordinance. Kevin suggested waiting to work on solar and wind farms until we are done researching communication towers since we have already started that process and are on a timeline. Dave said that the Town Board only gave direction to work on communication towers at this time. Sherri questioned if it would be appropriate to go to the Town Board once they finish with communication towers and ask for permission to work on wind farms. Dave agrees that it would be appropriate to get approval from the Town Board at a later date. Marcia Haller, who was present at tonight's meeting, stated that she was never asked to be part of the subcommittee who is working on the communication tower issue but wanted to know if she could give some input to the subcommittee regarding the information they have found about communication towers. Sherri, who is new to the planning board and also on the moratorium subcommittee, agreed to meet with Marcia to learn about what they have been through and the information they have found.

ZONING OFFICERS REPORT: Nathan said that Bob Dowson is starting construction on his cabin on Schultz Lake. MN Power has contacted Nathan to let him know that they finally got FERC approval to decrease the size of land they have to retain along the shoreline from 25 feet to 3 feet. There was some discussion about the type of easement that MN Power will be providing lake residents along the shoreline. Initially they were going to give all land owners along the lake a 3 foot easement for ingress/egress, however now MN Power is saying they would rather create one big outlot which would provide all homeowners a shoreline easement. Nathan

said he will ask MN Power to provide an updated plat showing the outlot rather than the individual easements and also the easement language to share with all the commission members at the February meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS REPORT: Dave gave a brief update from the last Town Board meeting including the issue on Needle Lane with the snowplowing and the DNR grant for the Gnesen Community Center.

- The next P&Z Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 16, 2022 at 7:30 pm.

A motion was made by Sherri to adjourn, with a second by Kevin. All voted in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:14 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah Blix, Planning and Zoning Secretary

Kathy Buran, Acting as Planning Commission Chair

Date

Date