

**Town of Gnesen Planning Commission
November 15, 2023 Minutes**

Members Present: Carter Williams, Pete Bergman, Sherri Underthun, Carol Jacobson, Joe Ferguson, Dick DeLano, Matt Thibodeau and Kevin Middleton and; Rick Hogenson, Zoning Officer, Mike Polzin, Zoning Officer and Hannah Jurek, Planning and Zoning Secretary.

Members Absent: Kathy Buran

Others Present: Theresa Lorentz and Al Werner

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: A motion was made by Carter to add Stewart Camp to the agenda under Old Business, seconded by Kevin. All voted in favor. Sherri made the motion to add Variance Process Expedited to the agenda under New Business, seconded by Carol. Hearing only to 'yes' votes Pete called for a roll call vote; Kevin-yes, Carol- yes, Sherri-yes, Joe- yes, and Dick- yes. Opposed- none, discussion. Pete called for the roll call because if you only have two people expressing a vote you can either go up or down, with calling a roll call vote you resurfaced and it passed, it's the process that Pete wanted to express. Motion passed. A motion was made by Carter to approve the agenda as presented with the two changes made, one to Old Business and one to New business; seconded by Sherri. All vote in favor.

APPROVAL OF THE October 18, 2023 MN Power Subdivision Public Hearing MINUTES: A motion was made by Carter to approve the MN Power Subdivision Public Hearing minutes, second by Joe. All vote in favor

APPROVAL OF THE October 18, 2023 MINUTES: A motion was made by Sherri to approve the October 18, 2023 minutes, second by Kevin. All vote in favor

CONTINUING BUSINESS:

Normanna Road Update: Matt attended the November 13, 2023 Town Board Meeting where the Normanna Road was discussed. The Violator/Squatter, was in jail for stealing a pick up truck. Sheriff Ramsey encourage the Township to send out that second situation which the Clerk's Office mail out after October 31. Gary will be talking will the land owner to encourage him to go to Sheriff Ramsey to start the eviction process. This is still and on going process.

MIG Update: This was another topic at the November 13, 2023 Town Board Meeting that Matt updated the Commission on; mentioning that Al Werner, Theresa Lorentz, and Aj Jensen were in attendance at that Town Board meeting along with Andrew Knutson from MIG. There were questions asked of Andrew as far as what the ultimate goal was going to be for this property. Matt told the Commission that Andrew said it wasn't going to be a parking lot, and that they didn't truly have any plans for the land they had cleared now. Another take away from the Town Board meeting was that folks at MIG weren't entirely pleased that the trees on the far west side of the property had been bulldozed, perhaps inadvertently by an employee on a Sunday, there were some questions asked about that at the Town Board meeting. There was also talk of erosion at the Town Board meeting as well. Carter wanted to point out that they did say they were done with the dirt work and the permit timeframe they had to do the work is over, and so anything that takes place now, they will have to start the process over again as far as permitting goes. Theresa Lorentz and Ale Werner were in attendance tonight, and they mention that there is still some dirt work happening, there are 2-3 dirt piles that they were removing. Andrew Knutson told Al after the Town Board meeting that there were 3 pile of dirt that they were going to be moving, but as far as sloping the hillside and anything like that they were done with that. Carter mentioned that MIG said they weren't going to do anything with that road appearing that goes back and around. Al Werner clarified by staying that they were told one of the employees did that. But he did want to clear up a statement made earlier in tonight's meeting, they do plan on using the cleared space for parking for the restaurant and the convenience store. At this time Al told the Commission that numbers were exchanged between him and Andrew for open dialog between the two parties. Carter mentioned that one of the issues that Andrew Knutson brought

up at the Town Board Meeting was that in the past they have applied for a permit, and there was a three week delay timeframe from the time they applied for the permit until they got some approval. They thought that was unreasonable so they went ahead and started the work. Carol introjected, stating she disagrees with that, stating that she does know they did not apply for that one permit three weeks prior, that they applied for it after it was built. It was then questioned if the permit in question was for the dirt work. Carol clarified, saying the permit in question was regarding the additional work added to the restaurant. Carter added, that they poured the foundation before getting an approved permit, but stated that it was a good meeting. Al agreed, saying the line of communication is opened, talking with Andrew after the meeting, saying Andrew's frustration with how MIG is being view in the community, Al said, personally with him it started with how former Zoning Officer Nathan had plans to include Al in a site visit, to voice his concerns, but Al never received a call, he happen to find out about it in the Gnesen Newsletter, telling Andrew if he would've had be part of the site visit and laid it all out prior to, they would've chatted, talked about the hillside, which is the main concern for W. Van Road residents. In conclusion, Al and Andrew have each other's numbers, moving forward the line of communication is there.

Guidelines for Chair, Vice Chair, & Past Chair: Sherri presented a document, that was forwarded to the Commission members prior to the meeting regarding guideline for the Commission. She then asked for input from the other Commission members, to help make the document something that they can operate under. Carol suggested a different approach, say that under Ordinance 10, under the Planning and Zoning Section, you see through out 3 different areas, that the Zoning and Planning Commission needs to create bylaws. Carol presented a draft of bylaws, and then when she was doing further research, she found a document, from 2019 a Planning Commission Handbook that attorney Gunner Johnson helped put together. Carol found in past Planning and Zoning Minutes from July of 2019 that stated that there was to be an August meeting prior to the regular meeting to discuss the handbook, but Commissioner Ed Erickson who took point on the project left, and the month after Gunner Johnson left, so the project was dropped. So Carol suggestion was to incorporate her findings with what Sherri put together, to create bylaws, since it is what Ordinance 10 says the Planning Commission needs to have. At the time of the meeting, Carol was only able to acquire one copy of the drafted Planning Commission Handbook. Sherri pointed out that in lieu of the holidays, she wouldn't mind tabling the project, suggesting that in December a group of 3-4 people to work on merging the information that has been found into one document to present in February. Sherri moved to table this until December, to form a committee in December, that we would have something to come back to the Commission in February. Matt suggested that we talk about it and get it done in December as opposed to forming a committee because if we form a committee its going to be to late to get anything done for the 2024 year. Pete asked when does the 2024 year start; Sherri clarified saying it starts in April. Pete then stating, that the commission has between now and April to put something together, question how that's not enough time. Matt states that he feels it doesn't need a subcommittee that we should be able to do this as a Commission. There was discussion Carter mentioned that last meeting Sherri expressed her concern regarding commitment of some of the Commission members. Sherri spoke saying that she has concerns regarding attendance of meetings and dealing with leadership, which she is comfortable with putting those in bylaws. Continuing, saying that people missing more then 3 meetings a year, or leaving early, your missing a quarter of the meetings. Understanding that things happen, vacations, illness, accidents, admitting that she too was almost guilty of that. The question came up of Zoom meetings, it was discussed then that the Township no longer has 'Zoom' that it is now Microsoft 'Teams'. And with that, the internet connection at the Community Center doesn't provide the best connection for virtual meetings.

Signs- Carter asked if there was an update from the Zoning Officers regarding the Shrink wrap sign issues around the Township. The Zoning Officers did not have enough time prior to this November meeting, they will work on it.

Shore land Commercial Zoning- The Commission was given a copy of the new description for a Shoreland Commercial Zone district that involved names of the landowners at the time. The new description will be added to the Ordinance.

Stewart Camp: Supervisor Gary Juten asked that the Commission look into this. Many members on the Commission remember discussing this many years ago. For those who were not on the Commission when the

Stewart Camp discussion started, Stewart Camp is a permit installation of campers campground on Berg Road, off of Abbott Road. The camp is now under new ownership. The previous owner operated with the knowledge that the Commission said it was okay, but that wasn't the case. The camp has multiple ordinance violations. The Zoning Officers and Secretary were tasked to find an exact address for Stewart Camp and forward that to the Commission. Hannah was told that there is most likely a file on the matter to find that and put Stewart Camp on the agenda for December.

NEW BUSINESS:

Land Use Training: A reminder to the Commission that the Land Use Training will be on November 30, 2023 at 6:30 pm. All members have RSVP as attending. At this time Matt brought it to the Commissions attention that the December Planning Commission Meeting will be on December 20. With that being so close to Christmas, and with people traveling, would anyone be opposed to moving the meeting up a week to December 13. After some discussion, Sherri made the motion to move the December Planning Commission meeting up to December 13, 2023. Seconded by Joe. All voted in favor.

Variance Process Expedited: Sherri added on the agenda finding ways to speed up the Variance process, opening up with some discussion regarding how our process is. Carter, Joe, and Carol clarifying saying that is all has to do with MN Statues. An idea Sherri brought up was having separate meeting for variances given the volume of variance that the Commission has been receiving. Dick mentioned that to change or add to our meeting schedule to accommodate a small few isn't reasonable. Pete adding if a person can't get their ducks in a row and know they need to apply for a variance and get the process started the Commission shouldn't accommodate for their faults. Kevin adding, that the Commission shouldn't bend over backwards and for someone who should've done their due diligent beforehand. Joe mentioning that all it takes is a simple phone to our Town Office to find out what the process is, Kevin adding that if one is hiring a contractor, contractors should know. He also added that in comparison to the City of Duluth, our turnaround as far as permits and variances are is quick.

ZONING OFFICERS REPORT: Rick brought it to the attention of the Commission that the Zoning Officers found different working but on the same form. This is in regards to a building permit. Mike and Rick are working through the second site visits, and Rick came across two permits, one stating that they have a year, one not saying anything, in both cases little progress was made on the builds. It was decided that the Commission will go through the Land Use Training, and then work on a new Building Permit with all the pertinent information. Rick also brought up the cartway at the end of Church Road, and how should he processed moving forward. The Planning Commission recommended to the Town Board to act on the issue.

BOARD MEMBERS REPORT: Nancy Poppenberg was not in attendance.

Next P&Z Meeting will be held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

A motion was made by Joe to adjourn, with a second by Dick. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Hannah Jurek, Planning and Zoning Secretary

Matt Thibodeau, Planning Commission Chair

Date

Date