

**MINUTES  
PEQUOT LAKES PLANNING COMMISSION  
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING  
JUNE 16, 2011**

PRESENT: Tom Adams, John Derksen, Bill Habein, Mark Hallan and Scott Pederson.  
ABSENT: Deb Brown and Cheri Seils.

CITY PLANNER: Charles L. Marohn, Jr., PE, AICP

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR: Dawn Bittner

COUNCIL LIAISON: Nancy Adams.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pederson.

**DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN DISCUSSION:**

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission that the intent of the rewrite is good. It was suggested that there should be a new name. Suggestions included Central Mixed Use Zone, Center City Plan, Pequot Lakes Center City Plan, Historic Core Growth Plan, and Grow Zone Expansion Plan.

Downtown means different areas to different people. The west side should be included but how far south should it go, the new grocery store. Maybe the original Pequot plat, the historic neighborhoods. The entire grow zone area was also suggested. Another suggestion was everywhere that infrastructure is located, supporting where infrastructure already is.

The new plan could have sub-plans: Government Drive; Park Plan; Industrial Park; City Plan; County Road 11 Plan; Housing.

Ways to implement changes in this area could include:

1. Change street standards in the downtown areas;
2. Look at walkability of downtown and stress ability to get around other than autos;
3. Adopt a form based code in the entire downtown area;
4. Look at overall park strategy and emphasize improvements and changes that add value to properties in the area.

Mr. Marohn will continue with Assets and Challenges for next month.

**PARK PLAN DISCUSSION:**

Mr. Marohn explained the Staff Report. A Park Plan needs to be tied to an economic development vision. The Mayor stated the City is having serious issues with the DNR for

use of the Park. The DNR could be assessed for their share of the Government Drive improvements.

The Mayor stated the Park Commission has done some surveys and they have also collected Master Park Plans from other communities to use as examples.

The Planning Commission offered suggestions to add to the survey questions.

**Chairman Pederson opened the Public Hearing:**

**APPLICANT: City of Pequot Lakes**

**Applicant requests an Ordinance Amendment to Officially Adopt Changes in State Law Regarding Variance Criteria.**

Mr. Marohn explained the Staff Report. A motion was made by Tom Adams, seconded by Mark Hallan, to recommend the City Council adopt the City Code Amendment regarding Variance Review Criteria. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

**Chairman Pederson closed the Public Hearing.**

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA:**

Add: Old Business: 8..d Recap of Comprehensive Plan as presented to City Council

Add: New Business: 7. a. John Derksen

**OPEN FORUM:**

Mr. Hallan asked why the Wood Carver sign is still in use. Staff advised a second letter had been delivered stating the sign had to be removed. The City Planner stated the property owner should have been sent a copy of any correspondence. Any fine would go to the property owner.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

John Derksen: Mr. Derksen requested his issue be discussed at the end of the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**a. Capital Obligations Inventory:**

Mr. Marohn stated he met with City Staff to collect the data already in place. Some of this information is used for accounting purposes and is a rough inventory, but will not work as a planning document. He stated he will start with what has been assembled, make a list of the gaps, and meet with City Staff as needed.

**b. Grow Zone Expansion:**

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission to incorporate both the Grow Zone Expansion and the Walkability Study into one discussion and to also include as part of the Downtown Master Plan.

**c. Walkability Study:**

See Grow Zone Expansion.

**d. Recap of Comprehensive Plan as Presented to City Council**

Chairman Pederson informed the Planning Commission that the City Council had tabled the Comprehensive Plan approval. When asked for his reason for not supporting Mr. Ryan stated he had already given his concerns to the Planning Commission. Chairman Pederson will revisit the recording of the May Planning Commission meeting and make notes of what his objections were. Mr. Akerson stated he agreed with the introduction. He also stated that the Comprehensive Plan as presented was not his vision for the town and couldn't accept the Comprehensive Plan. The approval will rest until fall as Mr. Ryan was too busy to work on it. Chairman Pederson stated that we will need to gather information from them explaining exactly what is missing or what is in there that they don't like. Chairman Pederson plans to ask Mr. Akerson for his vision points in writing.

Chairman Pederson asked Mr. Derksen to define his objections to the Comp Plan, either in writing so we can look at it or indicate where the verbiage can be found. Mr. Derksen stated the Economic Development part was developed on the Mom and Pop theory and that has been debunked. The City needs to attract manufacturing. Chairman Pederson stated he doesn't see where that is prohibited. Mr. Ryan pointed out Mann Lake but we have businesses that have done that too.

Mr. Adams stated that Mr. Ryan was critical of the City not attracting businesses like Mann Lake that started out in a garage and expanded. He is unfair and incorrect in not acknowledging that we have Landis Gyr, Hunt Technologies, that started out in a garage, and has 187 fulltime employees, professional jobs, well paying jobs. We also have the School District which has 180 fulltime jobs that are largely professionally educated people.

Mr. Derksen stated he is looking for companies that hire local people. He agrees with what Mr. Habein stated last month that the school has not educated people in the area for the jobs this area has. Mr. Habein stated that we cannot create \$10 to \$15 an hour jobs for people that don't have skills. Mr. Derksen stated we need to try to attract some companies.

Mr. Adams stated that TDS is a company in town. Those are a lot of jobs that are not minimum pay. We have smaller employers such as medical services, excluding assisted living, with 34 fulltime and 16 part-time jobs, and financial services with 77 fulltime and 10 part-time jobs, including CPA's and insurance. We do have entry level jobs, but we do have good, well paying jobs in a town of 2,000. Mr. Ryan was totally wrong stating we don't have opportunities.

Chairman Pederson stated Landis Gyr cannot be compared to Mann Lake for skills; Landis Gyr has a higher level of skill requirements.

Chairman Pederson directed Mr. Derksen if it is written in the Comp Plan that detracts or if something is missing that we should be doing to attract a certain category of jobs that we don't have, we need him to point that out, in writing. Define in detail or add something to satisfy your misgivings for us to look at; it is important that we are unified.

Mr. Marohn stated the City needs an environment that attracts entrepreneurship, a community that people want to be a part of. Mr. Habein stated that we lack a labor pool. Mr. Adams stated we are a net importer of jobs. We need to get those people to want to live here.

Mr. Derksen stated he will reread the Economic Development section again.

#### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Mr. Adams stated that Councilman Ryan was expansive in his commentary and the Minutes should capture some of his comments. Mr. Ryan recommends people go to Jenkins rather than Pequot Lakes. He was critical of Pequot Lakes not having good paying jobs. Staff will bullet point his comments and add them to the May Minutes.

Staff will also make notes for the Chairman of Councilman Ryan's comments.

A motion was made by Mark Hallan, seconded by Bill Habein, to table approval of the May 19, 2011 Minutes. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

#### **ZONING ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:**

Bittner pointed out the 6 permits issued and the 4 letters that were sent or received. The following Potential Violations/Enforcement Actions were discussed:

1. Lonesome Cottage SSTS request: Staff advised the deadline has not been reached.
2. MN/DOT letter regarding flowers in the right-of-way, Oasis Gas.

#### **John Derksen's New Business:**

Mr. Derksen explained that the school district is in their planning stages and has asked some of the coaches to reconfigure the athletic fields. They would like the School and the City to cooperate on a softball/baseball park, including playground equipment, restrooms, etc. This could also include the splash park and a skating rink. When not in use by the School, the City could use it for money making activities, such as tournaments.

Mr. Derksen asked where it could be located. They are potentially looking at a 5 to 6 acre site. The Babinski Industrial land adjacent to the school was suggested. Taking parcels off the tax role is a concern.

From a Planning and Zoning point, there is nothing to hinder the idea. Mr. Marohn reminded the Planning Commission that it will need to be within walking distance.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made by Mark Hallan, seconded by Tom Adams, to adjourn the meeting. All members voted "aye". Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Bittner  
Zoning Administrator