

MINUTES
PEQUOT LAKES PLANNING COMMISSION
REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING
JUNE 21, 2012

PRESENT: Tom Adams, Deb Brown, Bill Habein, J. J. Levenske, Scott Pederson and Scott Snyder. ABSENT: Cheri Seils.

CITY PLANNER: Charles L. Marohn, Jr., PE; AICP; and Justin Burslie, Community Growth Institute

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR: Dawn Bittner

COUNCIL LIAISONS: Jerry Akerson and Nancy Adams

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Pederson at 6:05 p.m.

PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS:

Sign Ordinance:

Mr. Marohn stated that at last month's meeting it seemed it was the consensus that the Sign Ordinance was not a hindrance for businesses, not an economic development tool for the City and not the most important thing to be working on.

Size of signs in the rural area was the primary complaint. The biggest problem earlier seemed to be the digital issue and that was dealt with. Council Member Akerson asked if we could do anything about the digital portion. He stated that the School and Chamber have requested a digital sign. He was reminded by the Planning Commission that after much discussion, it was agreed that gas prices only could be digital.

The School's sign may be off-site. We don't allow off-site signs, but we can't regulate content. Mr. Marohn explained that the League of Minnesota Cities has reviewed our code and they are comfortable with our language as defensible.

Council Member Akerson asked if that portion of the Code needs to be looked at. Mr. Marohn stated that the City's insurance carrier is comfortable with the language.

Mr. Snyder stated he remembered Mr. Linnell requesting a digital sign. Staff provided Chairman Pederson with a copy of Mr. Linnell's letter. Chairman Pederson stated the letter requests digital signage off site. Mr. Marohn explained that Mr. Linnell can apply for a Conditional Use Permit.

Council Member Akerson stated digital signs would allow banks to advertise their CD rates, etc.

Mr. Adams stated that it was not the Planning Commission's intent to expand digital signage to other businesses; no other uses. Mr. Habein concurred.

When asked by Chairman Pederson if the Planning Commission should reopen the discussion on digital signs, the straw-vote of the Commission Members present was: four – no; one – yes. Staff was directed to send a note to the City Council that digital signs were discussed at length and to formally respond to Mr. Linnell.

Chairman Pederson reminded the Planning Commission that the City Council directed them to make a recommendation to change the sign ordinance or not. Mayor Adams stated that 4' X 8' signs along County Road 107 will not go over very well. Mr. Snyder stated that signs that large would be acceptable along County Roads 16 and 11, but not 107.

Mr. Habein suggested sending the recommended changes in blue to the City Council. A public hearing needs to be held on an ordinance amendment.

Ms. Brown stated that the only issue seems to be the size of signs in the Rural Residential zone; we haven't had a lot of input from business people.

We have not seen much commentary from business people or residents; the sign ordinance isn't that bad, it's working. We need to be responsive to both; there is not much outcry, it's not working too badly. Why make changes at all?

Mr. Marohn stated we apply the Conditional Use Permit criteria for a Sign Concept Plan; there is no fee, no notices are sent out, etc. It's not a lengthy process. The Planning Commission votes on the Plan; the applicant can appeal the Planning Commission's decision to the City Council. There are no fees.

A motion was made by Tom Adams, seconded by Bill Habein, to send a recommendation to the City Council to leave the Sign Ordinance that is currently in force as is. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

Staff was directed to send a letter from Chairman Pederson to the City Council explaining the decision on the Sign Ordinance.

Staff was directed to send a formal letter to Superintendent Linnell and the Chamber regarding digital signs and to explain the CUP process for a Sign Concept Plan.

Grow Zone Expansion:

Mr. Marohn pointed out the one-page code contained in the packets. This area would include CSAH 11, park aspects, and downtown expansion. The Grow Zone and downtown could be simplified down to a few pages. We've been getting bogged down with Comp Plan discussion that it requires more regulation; this is the opposite. We need to simplify codes, etc. A one-page code wouldn't work outside of town, but it could be simplified though.

Chuck will bring a draft next month.

We need to reform and change our street design standards after the ordinance is amended. We need to get the public realm correct.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: None.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA:

ADD: New Business:
Fleck Stormwater and Landscaping Plan.

OPEN FORUM:

Council Member Akerson informed the Planning Commission that the Library will be holding a brat sale August 3 & 4 as a fundraiser at SuperValu. They are looking for volunteers from 11 am to 4 pm for one-hour shifts. You can sign up at the Library and it is a very good cause.

NEW BUSINESS:

Fleck Stormwater and Landscaping Plan:

Mr. Marohn explained the non-conforming structure 50% addition and structural improvements to the existing cabin that recently took place. He presented the landscaping plan that had been submitted and explained that it doesn't meet the intent of the Planning Commission or City Code with the amount of grading and rock within the Shore Impact Zone.

Mr. Marohn further explained the stormwater issue and the request in the Memorandum. He explained the retaining wall retention area north and northwest of the cabin, the stormwater retention area to the south of the addition, and their plan to plant wild flower seed for low or no maintenance. The concerns are the rock and fill to create the patio area. They plan to put in a rock wall but will shorten it. The rock wall will be boulders and end near the sidewalk.

This plan is more than Staff can approve as grading. The area needs to be stabilized and fixed. This would improve the situation a lot.

The quicker this gets fixed, the less damage is done. Staff was directed to give them a drop dead date. The boulders are not rip rap but create the retaining wall. Plantings will grow up naturally to hide the wall. Vegetation will be allowed to grow, as well as trees being planted. Bio-logs need to be in place now.

Staff was directed to inform Ann Beaver, Cullen Lakes Association, what has been approved and why.

OLD BUSINESS:

Mr. Marohn pointed out the article inserted in the packets: Smart Growth for Conservatives. Some of the arguments were good.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A motion was made by Deb Brown, seconded by J. J. Levenske, to approve the May 17, 2012 Minutes, as read. All members voted “aye”. Motion carried.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT:

Bittner pointed out the 8 permits issued and the 10 letters written. The following Potential Violations/Enforcement Actions were discussed:

1. Bill Moen;

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Scott Snyder, seconded by Tom Adams, to adjourn the meeting. All members voted “aye”. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Bittner
Zoning Administrator