MINUTES
PEQUOT LAKES PLANNING COMMISSION/
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 20, 2020

PRESENT: Mark Hallan, Laura Larson, Nathan Norton, Tom Paulbeck, Christopher Savino, and Wesley Wilson. ABSENT: Andrew Birch

CITY PLANNER: Justin Burslie, Sourcewell

ZONING SPECIALIST: Dawn Bittner

COUNCIL LIAISON: Mimi Swanson, Absent

Vice-Chair Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Hallan, seconded by Planning Commission Member Paulbeck, to open the Public Hearings. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:
APPLICANT: Curt Johnson, obo Jerry and Lois Akerson
Applicant requests an Ordinance Amendment to allow Ground Mounted Solar (continuation)
Mr. Burslie explained the Staff Report. Applicant was present.

Mr. Burslie stated Section 7.15 (2 B) stated ground mounted systems would only allowed on properties 5 A or greater. This would prohibit single units for residential use.

Planning Commission Member Hallan stated 20 feet in height is too high. He suggested 10 feet in height at maximum tilt.

Discussion ensued regarding ground mounted units in residential neighborhoods; they would count toward impervious coverage and could result in poor aesthetics for neighbors. They could be required to be in the rear yard.

Mr. Vaughn stated that only 25% of the units in the past have been ground mounts in residential areas. Typical ground mounts are 9 feet in height.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPENED:

Curt Johnson introduced John Vaughn from RREAL in Pine River and stated he supports the ordinance amendment as presented. He further stated Jerry Akerson's property is close to the substation making it an excellent location for a solar garden. Not every property would work. He suggested creating a process so smaller lots aren't precluded from solar use.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED.

Mr. Burslie suggested ground mounted solar systems located on parcels less than 5 acres be located in the rear yard and all ground mounted systems meet the accessory structure setback. He will forward the new language to the Zoning Specialist.

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Savino, seconded by Planning Commission Member Hallan, to recommend the City Council approve the ordinance amendment. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

APPLICANT: City of Pequot Lakes
Applicant Requests an Ordinance Amendment in the Public Zone
Mr. Burslie explained the Staff Report.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPENED:

Dan Ronning, Chair of Park Commission – Mr. Ronning stated he had sent several examples of both up-lighting and downward lighting to Staff. He asked for clarification as to the definition of 'pedestrian scaled lighting'. Mr. Burslie stated it is intended to be for pedestrian areas, meaning sidewalks. We don't need large street lights lighting sidewalks. This is intended to be for private property and doesn't apply to public right-of-way. It is not intended to light streets and intersections. When asked, Mr. Burslie stated the amendment would be allowing up-lighting.

Mr. Ronning stated he had a Zoning Map and noted downward directional lighting is required in the Commercial, Light Industrial, Recreation and Public zones. Up-lighting is allowed in all other zones, including the Downtown Mixed Use zone.

Mr. Ronning further stated most of the affected areas for birds migrating were large cities, such as Houston and LA.

After researching the City Code, Mr. Burslie stated up-lighting isn't specifically allowed, but it is not required in some zones. By default, up-lighting would be allowed.

Planning Commission Member Paulbeck inquired if there is a way to limit the power of the light going upward. Mr. Burslie stated there are ways to measure the light but enforcement may be an issue.

Vice-Chair Wilson stated he had contacted the maintenance department in Flagstaff and they use hardwired lighting for their flags. Only the LED bulb needs to be changed occasionally. The light is directed down, no shining lights in the sky, with minimal maintenance.

Planning Commission Member Norton asked Mr. Ronning if the comments he is making are personal or as a representative of the Park Commission. Mr. Ronning stated the comments were the consensus of the Park Commission; one member had concerns. Planning Commission Member Norton asked Mr. Ronning if he is in favor of the suggested amendment. Mr. Ronning stated if the amendment allows up-lighting, then he is in favor of the amendment.

Mr. Burslie stated pedestrian lighting is not defined and the amendment allows upward lighting of pedestrian areas such as sidewalks and walkways. It also allows landscape up-lighting which would include flag displays.

Planning Commission Member Savino stated there is a formula for a certain sized flag on a specific flagpole height and asked if there is verbiage that could be included limiting the amount of light on a flag. Mr. Burslie stated the power or intensity of the light could be regulated, but not what its lighting.

Mr. Burslie reminded the Planning Commission that this amendment is only for the Public zone.

PUBLIC COMMENT CLOSED.

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Savino, seconded by Planning Commission Member Paulbeck, to recommend the City Council amend the ordinance as presented. Motion carried. (5 Aye – 1 Nay Wilson)

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Hallan, seconded by Planning Commission Member Larson, to close the Public Hearings. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA: None.

OPEN FORUM: None.

NEW BUSINESS: None.

OLD BUSINESS:

a. Downtown Plan Update – Neighborhood Evaluation

The Planning Commission began with Olson Street and completed discussing each street segment. These discussion points will be included for continued discussion at another meeting.

b. Downtown Plan Update – Placemaking, Proposed Improvements and Implementation

Placemaking:

Mr. Burslie explained the red text for Trailside Park is new and can be edited or expanded. The Planning Commission asked if the splash pad could have a more 'up north' look, such as earth tone colors with water and boulders. The fountain picture should be upgraded to a Minnesota fountain or small waterfall.

Proposed Improvements:

Bittner explained rather than including text for proceeding with the suggestions in the Evaluation, Staff will work with the City Administrator and Public Works Director placing these items on the Capital Improvement Plan and implementing them.

Implementation:

This section will be looked at when the review is completed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Norton, seconded by Planning Commission Member Paulbeck, to approve the January 16, 2020 Minutes. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Larson, seconded by Planning Commission Member Paulbeck, to approve the January 28, 2020 Minutes. All members voted "aye". Motion carried.

P & Z ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

Bittner pointed out the 2 permits issued in January and the 2 letters sent since the last meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:
A motion was made by Planning Commission Member Hallan, seconded by Planning Commission Member Savino, to adjourn the meeting. All members voted "aye". Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn Bittner
Zoning Specialist