

## **Minutes of the Watab Township Special Meeting on Planning September 16, 2008**

Chair Craig Gondeck called a special meeting of the Watab Town Board to order at 7pm on September 16, 2008 at the Town Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to get further information about township planning. Board members present were Supervisors Gondeck, Lloyd Erdmann, Ed Kacures Jr. and Clerk Pat Spence. Audience members present were Maureen Graber, Hazel Durkin, Perna Roers, Bill Bettendorf, and Don Landwehr. Also present was Bridget Chard, Small Communities Project Coordinator, Pillager, MN 56473 (218) 825-0528. She was welcomed by Chair Gondeck to present information on Community Planning.

Planning Process: MN Statutes 462

Guides the Community's Growth—helps plan for the future

Plan/basic framework for town's future

Zoning is the rules to guide the adopted plan

Planning Commission is usually from 5 to 7 members; it usually does most of the work and makes a recommendation to the board

Planning commission meetings are subject to the open meeting law

Needs assessment of the community: done by the planning commission

Set goals/objectives to implement

Timeline for implementation

Update the plan every 3-5 years

Sequence for Planning:

1. Ordinance creating planning commission
2. Call for applicants through a public notice: develop a team
3. Introduction to planning process: training
4. Surveys of residents/focus groups
5. Plan draft/joint meeting with Planning Commission and Town Board
6. Plan hearing by Planning Commission/recommendation (these can be open houses such as Friday evening and Saturday morning)
7. Plan approval/adoption
8. Distribute copies to neighboring governmental entities

Outline of Plan Process

1. Public awareness, education, and information
2. Research
3. Components of Plan/Determine
4. Goals, objectives, policies and action plans
5. Mapping, appendixes, standards, policies, other area plans
6. Statutory Hearing Process
7. Recommendation to Town Board for Adoption
8. Copies

### Plan Components

1. History/community and natural
2. Population and projections
3. Environment/infrastructure included
4. Agriculture/critical habitat
5. Housing/income
6. Economy/land uses/aggregate
7. Transportation system—present/future
8. Community services/facilities
9. Parks/recreation
10. Land use compatibility
11. Inter-governmental relationships

### Factors to Consider in Planning

1. Planning Commission is always advisory to the town board
2. Consider local governmental units around you
3. Consider working with county/specialists
4. Benefits to community/see bigger picture
5. Plans have texts/maps, charts/ standards
6. Land use regulations/may or may not do: tool to guide plan; used for enforcement; different types; budget –consider costs, time and energy; experienced professionals

Bridget said that the cost would be \$5,000 to \$7,000. Maureen Graber asked why the township would want to do planning and zoning if the county already does it. Bridget explained that some townships want more restrictive zoning, or there may be distance issues from the township to the county seat. The township can also protect priorities.

### Planning/Zoning Re-Cap

1. Community planning is healthy
2. Done under M.S. 462.355
3. Zoning regulates the plan's goals
4. Zoning requires more considerations
5. Counties have worked with cities on their plans
6. Community process: planning commission is in touch with the citizens

### Planning Beginnings

1. Ordinance creating commission
2. Planning Commission members sworn in
3. Bylaws for commissions' work
4. Professional coordination for plan
5. Plan update and completion
6. Community meetings

#### Beyond Planning:

1. Zoning/M.S. 462
2. Develop budget
3. Create a board of adjustment by ordinance/bylaws
4. Zoning Ordinance: procedures, land use districts/performance standards, enforcement, fee schedule, etc. Different types of Ordinances. There is a 60-day rule, findings of fact— gives rational for variances, other; employ necessary staffing—attorney, engineer
5. Official land use map—

#### Planning & Zoning—Understanding the roles

##### Town Board:

1. Statutory Authority: M.S. 462, not 394 (county)
2. Subtle distinctions between above: only deal with hardship on variances/must be defined
3. Creates the Planning Commission
4. Town Board Can be Board of Adjustment: recommended at beginning or can be appointed/have a planning commission on it/3-5 members recommended
5. Makes the final decisions on: conditional uses, variance requests, appeals, and zoning ordinance changes

##### Planning Commission:

1. Advisory to town board, created by ordinance
2. Deals with the following: conditional use permits; zoning amendments, text and boundaries; preliminary and final plat review
3. Updates comprehensive plan and maps
4. Zoning ordinances/ex: land use, subdivision, wastewater
5. Interim permits
6. Conduct the hearing

##### Board of Adjustment:

1. Can be town board or combination
2. Created by ordinance
3. Deals with variance requests and appeals from decisions made by zoning administrator and or other decisions
4. Holds hearings

She closed with the following quote: “You can be a taker or you can be a caretaker of your land.”—Native American saying

Don Landwehr asked about current process. Is it legal to take back our zoning from the county so that it comes back to us for final approval?

Lloyd Erdmann talked about the disagreement we have with Benton County regarding use of Park Funds from Watab developments. For example, Lee Hanson's development generated over \$100,000 in park fees, but he has not recreational park benefit in Oak Hill Estates, which is required by State Statute.

The budget in Brockway Township for the process this year is \$23,000.

It would cost about \$6,000 to \$7,000 to set up a comprehensive plan with good mapping.

Chair Gondeck asked if it is normal for a township our size to be doing this: Rice is much smaller and has their own Planning Commission. If we did our own comprehensive plan, we could ask the county to acknowledge it. Then we could use the county's staff to enforce it. The township planning commission could go out for a site visit the same day as the county planning commission and their work compliments what the county is doing. All the permits can be set at an amount to cover costs or a percentage of the costs.

Chair Gondeck asked her about bonding for public roads. There is five-year road plan money; you have a public hearing on your five-year plan; if there are no reverse referendums you can go ahead. Bridget charges \$80 per hour for her services plus mileage. Supervisor Kacures asked about the benefit of having planning and zoning in relationship to annexation issues. Townships are always vulnerable to cities through annexation. Cost would be about \$75,000 to prepare to file to incorporate. Burns, Columbus and Scandia have recently incorporated.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15pm.

Respectfully submitted by Pat Spence