

Minutes:
Watersmeet Township Planning Commission

Regular Meeting of June 10, 2015

Watersmeet Township Office Conference Room

- 1) Meeting called to order by Vice Chairman David Sherrill at 6:31 PM.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance was given.
- 3) **Roll Call:** Members Present: Vice Chairman Dave Sherrill, Township Board Liaison-Rich Henriksen, Jeff Wasson, Larry Potter and John Cestkowski were present. Secretary John Neumann, Chairman Roy D'Antonio, Pete Peterson, and Jeff Zelinski were absent. As John Neumann the secretary was again absent, Rich Henriksen was asked to serve again as Secretary Pro-tem. Rich agreed to perform the task. Zoning Administrator –Dave Neumann and Township Board Supervisor- Mike Rogers were also present. Several other members of the community were present including Julie Mathiesen, Pat Walsh, Craig Hesse, Steve (the barber) and Peggy Tuttle.
- 4) **Approval of Agenda/Changes:** Vice Chairman David Sherrill asked that the agenda be amended to include; Zoning Ordinance Update discussion as item 9 and Public Comments as item 11. Rich Henriksen made a motion to accept the agenda as modified. This was supported by John Cestkowski. A unanimous yes vote followed.
- 5) **Approval of Minutes:** There were only three members, including the author, that were present at the May meeting. This is an insufficient number of members to approve the minutes. Therefore, approval of the May meeting minutes is tabled until the July 8th meeting where we may find at least five members of the Planning Commission present that were also present at the May meeting. The DRAFT minutes are still viewable and downloadable on the Watersmeet Township website: www.watersmeet.us
- 6) **Zoning Administrator Report:** Dave Neumann said he approved permits for one garage, one pole-barn and one deck. A land division is to be approved to provide additional area for parking north of the Library in North Land O Lakes. This will create a non-conforming lot limited to use as a parking area (non-buildable) and leave the parent lot as a still conforming lot.
- 7) **Recreation Plan Update:** Vice Chairman David Sherrill asked if anyone has seen an example output of one of Coleman Engineering's \$5,000 Recreation Plans. He also asked if anyone was aware of a competitor to Coleman in this particular area. Jeff Wasson stated that he doesn't believe this work needs to be out-sourced and can be done by the Planning Commission. David Sherrill noted that we don't currently have any community input which is fundamental in planning long term (five year) details of future projects.

Rich Henriksen said he would work with Alan Piel to capture the future Wilderness Lakes Trails bike-trail expansion goals. Julie Mathiesen suggested that members of the Planning Commission attend the various summertime get-togethers within the Township such as the CCROA Picnic, the Township's Independence Day Gala etc. The P-C members should identify themselves at these events and informally gather opinion from the attendees of these functions on recreational opportunities needing development. Rich Henriksen stated that he will be at both the Township Independence Day Festivities as well as the CCROA picnic and will attempt to gather some community input at those events. David Sherrill asked all the P-C members to each bring at least three recreational improvements to discuss at the July 8th P-C meeting. The discussion was tabled on a motion by John Cestkowski with a 2nd from Jeff Wasson. Voice vote: All in favor.

- 8) **Master Plan Update:** Dave Sherrill asked if the Planning Commission (P-C) members had filled in the blanks (done their homework). No. We need to figure what entity is responsible and a reasonable timetable for completing the listed objectives. We need to vote on the wording of the Master Plan. Therefore, all P-C members need to actually read through what is currently the draft plan. Additional work on the Master Plan was tabled until next month's meeting on July 8th, on a motion by John Cestkowski with support from Jeff Wasson. Voice Vote: All in favor.
- 9) **Update Zoning Ordinance:** David Sherrill asked that this be added for discussion. In the past, several areas of the ordinance were identified as needing to be looked at for consistency. Last month, the Zoning Administrator identified a need to establish sanitary requirements for camper trailers and motor homes used as seasonal dwellings on lots in addition to the L1 and L2 zoned lots. David Sherrill wants to see more items described in the "Definitions" section that are applicable to more than one zone. The idea is that a change to a definition would automatically apply to all zoning language throughout the ordinance that references that definition. Therefore definitions exist in a single place.
- 10) **Blight Ordinance:** David Sherrill reintroduced the topic by asking who if anyone would be tasked with enforcement if a Blight Ordinance existed? The Zoning Administrator would be the first step in enforcement. The Zoning Administrator would investigate and issue a citation, as appropriate. Where it would go from there is up in the air. It is a chicken/egg scenario as we currently have no blight ordinance. Supervisor Rogers has been unable to contact "Super Tilley" at Gogebic County (which is the biggest slum landlord in the Township of Watersmeet). Watersmeet Township is stuck with abandoned, uninhabitable structures seized by the county for back taxes. Then they just sit indefinitely as cleaning up the mess costs more than the property is ultimately worth. Therefore it will continue to sit; as-is, until the environment ultimately reclaims the land, which may well take many hundreds of years. The County and Township governments are demonstrating nonfeasance by continuing to ignore this problem. Rich Henriksen made a motion to table, "keeping it on the back burner", at the very least. This was supported by David Sherrill. Voice vote: All in favor.

- 11) **Public Comments:** Craig Hesse and Steve the barber said we must continue to pursue a workable blight ordinance as the commercial district looks less than prosperous and inviting. Julie Mathiesen had three comments:
- a. Need to consider a Noise Ordinance.
 - b. Need to promote a Bicycle Rally such as the Apple Cider Festival from downstate. Much discussion ensued as an event such as this could provide additional tourism and bring additional revenue to the township businesses.
 - c. EPA has new water rules that will further Federal Government takeover and regulation of water features “for the good of the public”. Some of these “water features” seem quite trivial but can, it is argued, ultimately affect flood plain functionality.

Township Supervisor Mike Rogers presented the artistic conceptual elevation of the new Township Office/ Community Center provided by one of the “short-list” competing architects, that the Township Board has been working with. Being barred from the school library; requiring this meeting to be held in the tiny conference room at the Township Offices, demonstrates how much we need the new Township Center. Julie Mathiesen asked about the ongoing discussion that the Township needs satellite fire stations and EMT centers. Supervisor Rogers responded that “manpower” is the weak link. As an example, he recalled the Township spending \$10,000 to train some potential EMTs. Not ONE person completed the training and Watersmeet Township got zero return on those dollars. The Township has an extra fire truck, an available site to locate a satellite fire barn, but no bodies to person it. Rich Henriksen hoped that someone develops a “robotic fire-fighter” that would be made available free of charge, as that seems to be the only solution within the current social/economic culture.

- 12) **Adjournment:** Motion to adjourn at 7:45 PM by Larry Potter, seconded by Jeff Wasson. Unanimous yes vote.

Respectfully submitted by, *Rich Henriksen* – Planning Commission Secretary Pro-tem

Approved: August 12, 2015