

LINCOLN COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Meeting Minutes

March 19, 2013

1. 5:30 – Meeting Called to Order by Board Chair, Paul Tisher

Present: *Kirsten Holland, Paul Tisher, Matt Bowser, Bonny Peterson, John Rios, Josh Letcher*

Absent: *Mark Romey, John Damon*

Staff: *Kristin Smith*

Public: *Frank Votapka*

2. Approval of Minutes – _____ moved to approve November minutes _____ seconded. Matt moved to accept February minutes; John D. seconded. Minutes approved. .

3. Agenda

a. Subdivision Review – Blue Mountain RV Park

Kristin presented the project, which is proposed for 20 new RV Pads on an existing RV Park approximately 6 miles north of Eureka on Hwy 93. The owners are Bill & Bessie Pluid. Adjacent land use is Currently there are 35 units. The park consists of a couple looping roads. She recommended approval with several conditions related to road construction and wildfire risk reduction based on the findings of fact.

Kirsten Holland asked how the applicant arrived at 34 trips per day for vehicle impacts.

Kristin explained the Institute for Transportation Engineers (ITE) standard average daily trip calculations for different types of use, but that rural recreational use was not cut and dry.

Frank stated that he thought the use would be as low as he estimated because he thought the users would primarily be coming and staying for several days making a trip or two to the grocery store.

Paul asked about the proposed expansion of the wastewater and water system.

Frank explained how the drainfields will be modified to accommodate the new units. He said there were 2 wells connected together.

Bonny stated she did not have any problems with the application.

Matt asked about the condition for weed maintenance and whether treatment would be done before or after disturbance of the property.

Kristin said they could change the condition to make it more specific, but she thought typically people waited till they were completed with their work before treating for weeds.

Kristin asked if the Fluids were not intending to rent the pads on a daily/weekly basis. Frank said primarily their clientele was interested in renting yearly or for a whole season.

Frank offered an explanation of the appeal to Canadians, that had to do with taxes and the exchange rate. He said his observation was people were treating the rental pads as cabin sites, making them permanent.

John R. had a question about the condition related to requiring a contract for solid waste removal and whether there was something in particular she was looking for. Kristin explained it was to ensure that they had a plan in place to address solid waste. The local company up there would require a contract if they were being asked to pick up the big bins anyway.

*Kirsten moved to approve; Bonny seconded. **Motion passed.***

b. General Discussion about RV Parks and Next Steps

Paul opened this agenda item by relaying the previous month's meeting with the Commissioners and that they seemed to be indicating to want to solicit input from the citizens first.

Bonny stated she was surprised to learn about the costs associated adopting a zoning district would be spread across everyone in the county. Kristin explained that there was some confusion about that and it was good to ask questions because it is a new topic that the county was discussing. She explained that most planning/zoning/building programs adopt fee schedules for different elements of the regulatory framework to support the staff. She explained that if a zoning district were adopted it would be folded into the workload and new projects would be reviewed for their conformance to the zoning.

She said enforcement was always going to be complaint-driven. No planning departments are out in neighborhood trying to identify compliance issues.

Kirsten stated that it was a double-edged sword to have so few rules. People come here and think it is great, but eventually, if everyone adopts an unstewardly attitude it will change the character of what it was people came here for in the first place. She wondered if the Lincoln County Commissioners might want to get together with the Flathead Commissioners because Flathead County has had zoning for decades.

Kristin stated she had a lot of materials available for anyone on the Board to review; and there were a lot of materials and resources online.

Paul wasn't sure about zoning, but thought something needed to be done.

Kirsten said she thought is an issue about impacts.

Kristin offered some thoughts about the public's general fear of zoning and the oft-heard statements about how zoning will cost the county so much money. She suggested if every covenant dispute were litigated, it would bog down the courts – a publicly funded entity.

Matt suggested the Board get a better grasp on what it was they were trying to address before going off in several directions in public meetings. He thought it would be better to have the conversation before going to the public.

John R. suggested “we don’t know what we don’t know”. Matt agreed and that’s why he thought the Board needed to get a better understanding before taking ideas to the public.

Paul suggested there was a different way to conduct a public meeting that might be better for getting good feedback too.

Kirsten asked if an effort were undertaken by the Board would it be for naught? She stated she was not necessarily pro anything other than preserving a quality of life that many generations have developed.

Kristin reiterated what Commissioner Berget mentioned at the last meeting which was that he could envision something like having one to three districts like a menu for residents to choose from for ease of administration.

Paul stated the Commissioners were a little confused by it [Turtle Lake] all too, because they stated that they do not like to go against the Board’s recommendations, but they had received so much negative feedback on that issue that they were caught off guard.

John R. stated the problem with public meetings was that generally it seems like people voicing opposition are a minority and it becomes an emotional flare-up not necessarily representing the opinions of the greater population.

Paul stated that it was true – he recounted the Growth Policy process and that people who showed up at the meetings were in the minority after they reviewed all the written comments, which by far outweighed those against it.

Kirsten stated the issue of RVs was a challenging one in Eureka because nobody wanted to speak against the economic activity that it is currently bringing into the area, but there are real impacts that the residents are feeling because of a set of actions that comes along with the RVs.

Josh suggested zoning everything from the Libby Dam all the way down to the Troy city line and allows only log cabins to promote the outfitting businesses that float the river.

Bonny asked if anyone had gone to the CEDS meetings? She said the information in those meetings has revealed the amount that tourism now brings to the economy. She said places that had adopted a resort tax to address impacts created by influx of people were benefitting and building on their communities.

John asked if that would be good for the Board to add to their agenda some information about zoning so they could get educated since there is a range of knowledge on the topic on the Board.

Kristin suggested the Montana Association of Planners had some resources available for mini-training sessions she would look into. She could pull some information together also, but asked if people had questions it would help her to target it a little better.

Paul commented that properties that were recently subdivided are now coming back to have RVs on them.

Kristin passed out a couple different zoning districts from different areas outside Montana that might provide the Board with some ideas some different things to consider as the discussion continues.

[multiple people talking at once]

There was some discussion about the different issues associated with the RV’s – impact to quality of life; appropriateness of locations (i.e., next to established residential areas).

Kristin re-iterated that there are a variety of ways to implement zoning; by adopting performance standards; identifying use; or combinations of both.

John R. suggested identifying areas in the County where RV Parks should be located.

Paul stated the Board was going to have to have some public meetings.

Kristin stated the benefit of having some public meetings would be in identifying people's tolerance levels by gleaning information from well-crafted questions. She also said we were not working with a blank slate so expecting to be able to draw circles on a map without upsetting anyone was not going to work.

Bonny spoke about her experience in Alaska and how the community she lived in limited the number of camps in a particular area, but it did not have a negative impact on the economy – it improved it.

Paul asked if there were any proposals at the legislature addressing RV Parks.

Kristin said there was proposed changes to the Rent or Lease provisions of the subdivision laws which may have some consequences. She was unsure where they were going to end up.

Kirsten suggested the County cannot just keep opening its doors and say come do whatever you want here.

Josh asked if the County was overpopulated. He referred to the Koochanusa Reservoir and a plan in 1965 that estimated 1.4 million recreationists on the lake, but there were 140,000 in 2011.

Kirsten said overuse in certain areas in concentrated time and how to deal with it.

Paul said he could see Eureka having some tax in the future. He asked if the Board was in consensus that they needed to have some public meetings.

Kristin described a public meeting process that was less sterile than what's been done in the past.

4. Planning Department Report

Kristin said Sophie Lake RV Park would be on the next agenda as would another major subdivision in the Eureka area. Kristin also announced that the county was still looking for suggestions for a new Troy area representative.

5. Planning Board Comments And Questions

John asked what other issues the county was facing. Kristin and Paul both said gravel pits. The Department of Environmental Quality was the only agency that issued open cut mine permits.

Bonny suggested there should be a couple meetings in different places on the RV issues.

The Board asked Kristin to bring some information and maps.

6. Next Meeting – April 16th

7. 7:30 – Meeting Adjourned