

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 23, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by chairperson, Larry Shaffer.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Shaffer, Lou Lundquist, Phil Bontrager, Christine Lundquist, Jenny Irvine

OTHERS PRESENT: Julia Cogger from CUPPAD

AGENDA: The agenda was approved on a motion by Christine with support by Lou.

MINUTES FROM 12/19/22: The minutes from 12/19/22 were approved on a motion by Phil with support by Lou.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Larry noted that comments related to the Master Plan should be held for the public hearing. There were no public comments at this time.

PUBLIC HEARING ON MASTEER PLAN: On A motion by Lou with support by Phil, the public hearing on the Master Plan was opened.

Larry asked Julia to review the process that had occurred to date in compiling the draft of the plan, including the surveys and public meetings on specific topics. Larry then reviewed correspondence sent to the Commission from the following individuals:

- Dan Livingston
- Paige Eaton
- Kevin & Elissa Green
- Karen Brzys
- Brian Carter
- Mary Ivers & Tony Ramirez
- Jill Petkash
- Jill Devenport
- Mary Capagrossa
- Susan Fruehauf
- Jan Ogden

Larry then opened the floor for public comment:

- Karen Brzys indicated there were not enough action items and too much “fluff”. She indicated concerns over the possible sewer system and asked what would happen if it was installed and didn’t work properly. She asked about cost/benefit and questioned if it would be cheaper to simply fix individual septic systems for people in the community.
- Al Larson indicated he supports having an industrial area on M-77 and hopes to build a garage and towing business in that area. He also suggested that the Township could provide land near the Community Center for food trucks to keep them off the Bay Shore area.

- Sandy Fisher expressed concerns about costs to maintain new infrastructure proposed. She noted that EMT services are a serious issue facing the Township. Sandy noted that costs for a sewer system would be paid only by users of the system, which is a limited area of the Township. She also expressed concerns related to ORVs/4-wheelers overtaking the town.
- Elise Cormier also expressed issues related to ORVs and snowmobiles and having rentals available in the downtown area. She is concerned that jet ski rentals could be added which could significantly affect enjoyment of the bay by those looking for a quiet & peaceful time in Grand Marais. She expressed concerns related to the proposed sewer system and the possibility of leakage into the Sucker River. She encouraged the Township to keep some public beach access “unpublicized” so those areas remain quiet areas.
- Sharon & John Babbit asked about the process of reviewing the plan at this point and if tonight’s concerns would actually be considered before approving the draft.
- Elise Cormier referenced a plan from 1970 that included several action items and specific steps to be taken.
- Jan (JC) Ogden asked if the health department, whose job it is to approve septic systems, might provide a presentation for Township residents to improve knowledge of current legal requirements.

Motion by Christine with support by Lou to close the public hearing. Motion carried.

Larry invited Commission members to comment.

It was noted that a sewer system is not something that the Township is trying to push to have completed. However, based on the experience of several other communities in the U.P., it is important to have a potential plan in place and be aware of possible funding sources, since the State can come in and force the community to install one if there are any issues. Christine also noted that when she built her home 5 years ago, even on a double lot, placement of the house was largely determined by the need for sufficient space to satisfy the health department requirements related to the septic system. She also noted a friend with a single lot in west town that does not have enough space to build a home and traditional septic. Citizens need to be aware of how regulations have changed since systems were put in years ago and the difficulty that may be faced if they need to be replaced.

The Commission members commented on concerns about development of the downtown area. They expressed some confusion about what led people to assume significant changes in the area were being proposed. Maintaining the quaintness of the town is a priority, and nobody is proposing growth like what has overtaken Munising. However, we do need to prepare ourselves for the potential increase in traffic with the paving of H-58 east of town.

The aging population of Grand Marais and the desire to see younger people with families join the community was noted. The lack of jobs to support a family and housing issues were noted. While a large industry is unlikely and perhaps not even desirable, taking steps to provide opportunity to build business along the M-77 corridor and provide broadband connections that would allow professional work from home may help.

The Master Plan process and development of specific steps to take was reviewed. It was noted that the Master Plan is intended to provide guidance to the Township related to citizen needs and desires. Detailed steps for satisfying those needs and desires are not specific to a Master Plan.

RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE MASTER PLAN: A motion was made by Christine with support by Lou to postpone adoption of a plan pending further review. Motion Carried.

Larry suggested a meeting before the next regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting to specifically review the plan and concerns expressed. A meeting will be scheduled for April 4th at 4:00pm, pending space availability.

OTHER: Christine requested that the Township look into training for Commission members related to zoning law development prior to that project beginning. Larry and the Township Clerk will look into training options available.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned on a motion by Christine with support by Jenny.