

PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES - APRIL 24, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by chairperson Jenny Irvine. Jenny welcomed new member, Victor Senk.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Williams, Phil Bontrager, Victor Senk, Jenny Irvine, Rod Lowe, Walt Mixon, & Christine Lundquist.

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

MINUTES: The minutes of April 7, 2025 were approved on a motion by Jenny with support by Paul.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Jon Babbit encouraged the Commission to use the expertise of the Zoning Administrator as we complete the zoning ordinance draft. Jon indicated that he has put together a committee on transient merchants and handed out information they have put together. He would like the Commission to review it and consider if it should be added to the zoning ordinance in whole or in part.

Toni Whaley indicated she has been doing some research, using an attorney with expertise in real estate law. She indicates her business does not really fit into an allowable use where located, but based upon her research, it can continue to operate in any capacity in which it has been used since the original business was opened. She would still like to see it zoned as commercial.

Cassandra Hildebrandt suggested we could limit how commercial property could be used, including within the buffer zone where she would like to open a campground.

Victor Senk indicated that after reviewing the Master Plan, existing zoning ordinance, and proposed zoning ordinance, he feels “managed change” is needed to preserve the character of Grand Marais. He talked about the aging population and the need for assisted living and a nursing facility.

ZONING MAP REVIEW: It was noted that not all of the requested changes to the maps had been made by the consultant.

It was noted that portions of the Voyager Motel property still need to be marked as commercial. Motion by Rod with support by Walt to have the change made. Motion carried.

Jenny noted that one of the maps incorrectly shows “resource protection” instead of “resource production” in the legend.

Toni Whaley again suggested her property be removed as commercial for multiple reasons. The owners of the Voyager property indicated they would be okay with their property not being

commercial as long as they were given a special use permit to allow them to expand as desired. Calvin McShane, Zoning Administrator, discussed options that might be considered. On a motion by Rod with support by Victor, it was agreed that Calvin would discuss various options with other businesses not zoned commercial and report back to the Commission next month.

Victor discussed issues with the maps versus the Master Plan and expressed concerns regarding the RR district replacing R1 & R2.

Jenny asked about Braziel Street on the map and questioned how much we wanted marked as "downtown". After discussion, it was agreed on a motion by Jenny with support by Phil, to limit the area to 2 blocks from M-77 on the maps.

Given that it was approaching 8:00pm, Jenny suggested that further discussion of maps should happen at a future meeting, after information from Calvin was available to the Commission. Calvin plans to have that information by the May 20 meeting, including information related to tax assessment.

Given that so little of the agenda was completed, it was agreed that a special meeting will be held on April 29 at 4:00pm to review ongoing issues with the text of the proposed zoning ordinance. Copies of Christine's notes as well as emailed comments from the consultant on prior issues brought to his attention were included in the Commission's packets and would be reviewed at the next meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Jon Babbitt asked if we could include review of the transient merchant information at the special meeting. That would allow us feedback prior to the next Township Board meeting. It was agreed this would be done.

OTHER: None

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