

Empire Township Planning Commission, Meeting Minutes

October 5, 2021

The Empire Township Planning Commission was called to order by Tom Kaldunski at 8:00 PM.

Present were: Tom Kaldunski, Trent Larson, Jared Sachs, Bob Bjerke, Doug Clark, Jane Kansier, Brad Fisher, Charles Seipel-Teng, and liaison Jamie Elvestad.

The Planning Commission reviewed a request from Greg Brand to assign building rights to the newly subdivided parcels that were approved for subdivision last month (PID's 12-02800-03-013 and 12-02800-76-013). Mr. Brand would like to assign two building rights to each new 80-acre parcel. Currently, the south parcel has three building rights, and the north parcel has one building right. The Commission discussed whether a building rights assignment would be appropriate as the building right assigned to the north parcel would not be used for residential development. It was recommended that Seipel check with the Township attorney about the possibility of noting in the letter approving the subdivision, that the two parcels contain four building rights as a whole. If Mr. Brand decides to sell one of the parcels, he would need to decide how he wants the building rights assigned.

Evan Carlson with IPS Solar requested information on properties that might be a good opportunity for a solar array project. Empire Township's Zoning Ordinance does not currently permit new solar array projects. It was noted that for a solar array project to be constructed, the Zoning Ordinance would need to be amended. Mr. Carlson asked if there were any properties that are not able to be used as intended because of issues with the property. He also asked if the Commission would consider amending the ordinance to permit solar arrays on properties that meet specific criteria. The Commission indicated that they did not know if any properties meeting specific criteria would exist as a significant portion of the Township is tied up in other uses. It was suggested that Mr. Carlson contact the UMore property as there may be land with contaminated soil that would have limited uses.

Representatives from McNamara Contracting presented information on a proposed sign replacement for their business on Highway 3. The new sign would have a stone base and be 135-5/8" tall and 144" wide and would replace the existing sign at the same location. It was recommended that the new sign be located no closer to the Highway 3 right-of-way than the current sign. Jane will check on the required setbacks. The applicant should submit a site plan through the zoning review application so that the setbacks can be verified.

The Planning Commission reviewed a proposed comprehensive plan amendment by the City of Lakeville to rezone some property west of I-35 from General Commercial to Medium Density Residential. The Planning Commission had no comment on the proposed amendment.

Brad Fisher reported on information he received from an open house hosted by Dakota County regarding the County Road 66 & Highway 52 Study. According to the County, the existing U-turns at the intersection will not be able to accommodate increasing traffic. Plans call for an overpass and onramp interchange either at the existing location or at the County Road 62 location. Jared Sachs noted that it is very difficult for farm equipment to cross highway 52 at the existing intersection. There were concerns that an onramp at the County Road 62 intersection will have visibility issues due to the elevation at that location. It was reported that a pavement improvement project along Highway 52 will also begin in 2023 through 2024. It was recommended that a joint meeting with the Planning Commission, Town Board and Dakota County Representatives be held to discuss the proposed intersection improvements.

The Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.