

Empire Township Planning Commission Minutes

June 7, 2022

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

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

Jane Kansier presented a memo that outlines the concept plan for the DNH property. The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed layout of the concept plan. It was noted that depending on the proposed use of the site, re-zoning and comprehensive plan amendments may be required. Dakota County will require additional ROW along CASH 46 for future four lane expansion and trail placement. The development will need to be served by the existing County Road 81 alignment until the time that County Road 81 is realigned by the County and the portion that goes through this development is transferred to Empire. With the current alignment, only two access points will be permitted. Septic and well locations will need to be provided for each parcel and stormwater plans will need to be provided for the entire development. Outlot A will be combined with the lot to the north.

Andy Biggs and Dave Domack provided more information on the proposed development. They indicated that the development would retain commercial east of present County Road 81 and light industrial west of 81, so a comprehensive plan amendment should not be necessary. A proposed stormwater pond will be sized to serve the development. The parcels will be large enough to provide water and septic. Drainage will run from the north side of the development to the west and then south. They will start working with engineers for the preliminary plat and focus on developing a plan for road access and width. They will continue to work with Empire Township as the site develops and 81 is turned over to the township. DNH plans to have a facility for Nitti Sanitation as well as a construction company by the end of next year, with a transfer station proposed for 2024.

It was the consensus of the Planning Commission that they were supportive of the concept plan as presented.

John Sass and Doug Abere, with Dakota County Transportation, presented information on future County Road alignment options in Empire Township based on past corridor studies. A map showing potential future realignments was presented, with different colors on the map representing ROW widths. There was concern by members of the Planning Commission and residents attending the meeting, that future alignments for County Road 81 jog east and west and do not provide a more direct north to south flow. John Sass indicated that this alignment was based on a 2010 corridor study. The Planning Commission requested that the alignment

for 81 be reviewed and an update be provided on the rationale for the alignment and if a more direct north to south route is feasible. County staff indicated that future realignments will be development driven.

Doug Abere presented information on the options that are being considered for the future interchange at Highway 66 and 52 in Vermillion Township and potential realignments of Highway 66, depending on where the new interchange is placed. A new intersection is needed to help address safety concerns and increasing traffic volumes at the current intersection. Mr. Abere apologized for not providing updates to Empire Township and potentially affected property owners in the township about the effects of potential realignments sooner.

Potential issues with required bridge replacements over the Vermillion River were discussed as well as the need for a realigned road to potentially cross the pipeline that runs from the Flint Hills refinery. Mr. Abere indicated that they are taking these things into consideration.

One option includes a new interchange at the current intersection. There are also options that include a new interchange where 62 currently intersects with Highway 52 and an option with a split interchange, at the current intersection and at the intersection at 62. The split interchange would not require bridge upgrades.

County Highway staff are narrowing down the alternatives and will work with the Federal Highway Administration on interchange design. They expect to have the options narrowed down by July. An open house is planned for July 27th to review the revised list of options. Notices of the meeting will be going out to potentially impacted property owners as well as Vermillion and Empire Townships and the City of Vermillion. Construction is expected to take place by 2025 or later.

The Planning Commission reviewed a memo relating to the site plan review for the American Tower CUP. It was noted that storage of equipment will take place inside of an existing building at the site. Jared Sachs made a motion to approve the site plan for American Tower. Trent Larson seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

The Planning Commission reviewed a memo relating to the site plan review for the Met Council WWTP site. It was noted that the engineer still needs to review the grading plans for the site. It was also noted that this project may coincide with the roundabout project and intersection closure at Highway 3 and 66. The engineer will look into some possible detour routes to be used by truck traffic related to this project to help ensure that truck traffic stays off of residential Township roads. Tom Kaldunski made a motion to approve the site plan review for the Met Council WWTP site improvements. Doug Clark seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

It was reported that there has been a concern about a possible tree cutting business being operated out of a property in the AG District. The Planning Commission recommended that the property owner be contacted so that they can provide the Commission with more information about what is taking place at the property.

It was noted that the hearing on incorporation went well. The Township has requested a ruling by mid-July. A ruling would be needed by that time if City elections were to take place in November.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20 PM.