

Empire Planning Commission Meeting Minutes November 17, 2020

The Empire Township Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Commission Chair Tom Kaldunski and at 8:00 PM at the Empire Township Public Works Building.

Present were: Tom Kaldunski, Jared Sachs, Bob Bjerke, Jane Kansier, Charles Seipel, and liaison Ed Gerten (via Zoom).

Steve Carr with PBM Wireless discussed his goal to seek sites in Empire Township for the placement of a 200' tall wireless communications tower. One particular site that he was looking at is the site owned by Empire Township on Highway 3 at which the Township water tower is located. The Commission noted that this particular site would not meet the required setbacks for the tower. Mr. Carr indicated that he would work to provide evidence that the tower will collapse upon itself per Section 6.17 -D of the Zoning Ordinance. It was recommended that the request to place the tower on the water tower parcel be brought by Mr. Carr to the Town Board.

It was reported that after the meeting at which the Dakota County Land Conservation was discussed with the Town Board and Planning Commission, the County has approved the removal from the plan all land in Empire Township that was identified for potential conservation easements, for the time being. The County will approach the Township at a future date to discuss potential sites for conservation easements. In the meantime, the Planning Commission will continue the discussion on what areas would be candidates to be included in the plan. It was noted that the Township has several outlots identified as wetlands in developed areas that assist with some of the goals of the plan. It was recommended that the Township check with the Met Council to see what portions of the Township might be included in future MUSA extensions and make sure that future conservation areas in the Township are not included in the possible MUSA area. The Township should also consider areas that will not prevent areas adjacent to new easements from reasonably farming their land or selling it for development.

It was reported that the Town Board has approved a parcel split request from Ames Construction to split a 1.66 acre parcel from the UMore owned land to property owned by Ames (Colline Inc.). The split was brought to the Town Board due to concerns about the timing with the upcoming closing. The parcel will serve as the site for the septic system for the new Ames Construction facility. Tom Kaldunski made a motion to support the parcel split. Jared Sachs seconded. Motion passed 3-0.

The Planning Commission discussed the possibility of permitting food trucks in Empire Township. The Commission is receptive to the idea of permitting food trucks in the Township provided that the food trucks receive a vendor's license that has been approved by the Township and operate in public spaces such as parks, upon request. Trucks can currently operate in residential areas on a temporary basis provided that they are on private property and serving in the capacity of an event caterer, and not selling at the location.

Jane will check to see if the permitting of food trucks would need to be written as a separate ordinance or if it would fall under an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance. The Town Board should discuss how they would like to proceed with this.

A public hearing regarding the Phase II of the Met Council WWTP site has been scheduled for the December 1st Planning Commission Meeting. The Commission discussed options to join the hearing remotely if needed. A Zoom link has been posted in the meeting notice.

It was reported that the Township has received two applications for the vacancy on the Planning Commission. The Town Board will be interviewing the candidates on December 8th.

It was reported that the Township has received a notice of review period for the new Dakota County Transportation Plan. Jane will bring some comments that she has to the December 1st meeting, after she has had a chance to review the plan. Tom Kaldunski indicated that the Commission would like to review the transportation maps.

The Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.