

City of Empire Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

September 19, 2023

The City of Empire Planning Commission meeting was called to order by Jared Sachs at 8:00 PM.

Present were: Jared Sachs, Elizabeth Haas, Gina Maunu, Doug Clark, Charles Seipel-Teng, and Councilmember Marla Vagts. Commission member Julie Stulz was absent.

Public Hearing- The meeting was opened to a public hearing to consider an amendment to the Empire Zoning Ordinance to add essential services as a permitted use in the Mineral Extraction (ME) District. The city has not received comment from the public regarding the hearing prior to the meeting.

Charles Seipel-Teng presented a memo regarding the proposed amendment.

It was noted that other districts in the zoning ordinance have essential services as a permitted use and facilities such as the Northern Natural Gas facility at 170th Street and Highway 3 has operated in the district for several years. Staff believes that not including essential services as a permitted use in the ME District was an oversight. Jerod Sachs asked why electrical transmission lines above a certain voltage is not included in essential services. It is listed as such in the ordinance definitions. The Planning Commission should discuss if this needs to be amended in the future.

Doug Clark made a motion to close the public hearing. Elizabeth Haas seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Elizabeth Haas made a motion to recommend adoption of the proposed zoning ordinance amendments to include essential services as a permitted use the ME District. Gina Manu seconded. Motion passed 4-0.

Wendy and Bill Wustenberg presented information about recent storm damage and proposed plans for their farm property on Ahern Blvd. The farm received extensive damage from a hailstorm on July 24th. They inquired about permitting for storm damage repair as well as a proposed 4 season porch and pole barn expansion for hay storage. A permit would be needed for the roof and siding repair for the home but not the ag buildings. A permit would be needed for the 4-season porch and pole barn expansion, the inspector will need to know well and septic locations and footings. Wendy Wustenberg indicated that shop building will need to be repaired. They are considering expansion of the building to possibly serve as an ag tourism facility.

Discussion was held on if such a facility would be permitted in the zoning ordinance or if the ordinance would need to be amended to have such a facility as an IUP. The Planning

Commission recommended that the Wustenbergs put together a business plan for the facility when they get to that point and the city's planner will review for a recommendation.

It was reported that Charles Seipel-Teng, Marla Vagts and Brian Hilgardner attended an open house, hosted by MN DOT, earlier this evening. At the open house several concepts were presented for future traffic flow improvements for Highway 3 between 160th Street and 220th Street. Seipel-Teng indicated that some concerns that they shared were the future of the intersection at Highway 3 and 197th Street. Will there need to be a stop light placed there in the future as traffic increases? Many of the proposals that were presented included the construction of a roundabout at existing intersections in Farmington that have stoplights. There was a concern about having several roundabouts in a row with no stop lights to break up the traffic. Having Biscayne Ave. as a reliever to Highway 3 would go a long way in decreasing traffic and increasing safety along Highway 3.

The Planning Commission reviewed information on PUD's and mixed-use developments in neighboring cities. The City of Lakeville developed Brandjten Farms as a PUD, with a mix of housing types, commercial areas, and spaces for parks and trails. The City of Farmington developed the Fairhill development on Highway 3 as a non-PUD, with a mix of low and medium density residential districts.

It was reported that Kwik Trip has submitted their applications for preliminary plat, final plat, site plan review, and CUP for the carwash. The plans are currently being reviewed by Jenni. A neighborhood meeting, to be hosted by Kwik Trip, has been scheduled for October 4th.

The Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 9:20 PM.