

MINUTES
Blue Earth County Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
Wednesday September 2, 2015
7:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:15 p.m. by Chairman Lyle Femrite. Planning Commission members present were Bill Anderson, Kurt Anderson, Kip Bruender, Lyle Femrite, Chuck Grams, Berry Jacques and Joe Smentek. County staff members Aaron Stubbs, Chris Meeks, Ben Effah and George Leary were also present.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Kurt Anderson made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 5, 2015 Regular Planning Commission Meeting. Mr. Jacques seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

3. AGENDA APPROVAL

Mr. Leary indicated there was no change to the agenda. Mr. Leary advised the Commission that staff had made some changes to the meeting format. Said changes included providing the public in attendance a copy of the Planning Commission Duties and Powers and the findings required.

4. NEW BUSINESS

PC 18-15

Myles M. and Marcene D. Bromeling Revocable Trusts - Request for review and approval of the Final Plat of Bromeling First Addition. A subdivision consisting of one lot and one outlot. The property is located in the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 3, Decoria Township and is zoned agricultural and is within the Urban Fringe Overlay District of the City of Mankato.

Mr. Effah presented the staff report.

The applicants were present and had no comment.

There was no public comment and little discussion by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Bruender proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board with the conditions as presented by staff. Mr. Smentek seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PC 19-15

Anthony & Catharine Nass - Request to transfer the residential development right from the Northeast Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 36 Sterling Township to the Southwest Quarter of the Northwest Quarter of Section 36 Sterling Township. The property is zoned conservation and agricultural and is located in the shoreland overlay district of Lura Lake which is classified as a Natural Environment Lake by the Minnesota DNR.

Mr. Effah presented the staff report.

The applicants were present and had no comment.

There was no public comment and little discussion by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Smentek proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board with the conditions as presented by staff. Mr. Bill Anderson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PC 20-15

Mitchell Abbas - Request for approval of the Final Plat of the Mitchell Abbas Subdivision. A subdivision consisting of three lots and four outlots. The property is located in part of the southwest quarter of Section 16 Cambria Township and parts of the southeast and southwest quarters of Section 17 Cambria Township. The property is zoned conservation and agricultural and includes areas that are within the Shoreland Overlay District of the Little Cottonwood River.

Mr. Leary presented the staff report.

The applicant was present and had no comment.

Mr. Femrite opened a discussion on the increased bluff setback as suggested by the DNR. Mr. Abbas stated that the increased setback would impact the future development of that lot.

Mr. Femrite asked if there could be a compromise on the setback. Mr. Abbas indicated he would rather not compromise.

There was no public comment.

Mr. Kurt Anderson and Mr. Grams opined that the 130 foot setback seemed a bit excessive.

Mr. Kurt Anderson and Mr. Bruender both indicated they could support the standard 30 foot bluff line setback.

Mr. Kurt Anderson proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request as presented with the standard 30 foot bluff line setback requirement to the County Board with the conditions as presented by staff. Mr. Smentek seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PC 21-15

South Central Electric Association - Request for review and approval of a conditional use permit to construct a solar energy system with a power capacity greater than 100 kilowatts. The project will include approximately 0.70 acres. The property is located in the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of Section 2, Lincoln Township and is zoned Heavy Industrial.

Mr. Stubbs presented the staff report.

Mr. Jim Haler was present on behalf of South Central Electric Association. Mr. Haler commented that the energy generated would be used by members of the Co-op.

Mr. Femrite asked about the intended cover under the solar system. Mr. Haler indicated it would include a grass and clover cover. He added that there is no need to level the site and no vegetation removal during the construction of the facility.

Mr. Femrite asked about the frequency of activity on the site once it is up and running. Mr. Haler replied that it would not be very often. Activity would primarily be limited to simple maintenance and occasional mowing and weed control.

Mr. Jacques asked about the life expectancy of the system. Mr. Haler said they should last in excess of 25 years. He added they had a long term lease purchase agreement with North Star Ethanol.

Mr. Femrite asked staff for recollection of the development of the solar ordinance relative to runoff control.

Mr. Leary stated staff needs to check again with the MPCA and the Army Corps of Engineers as to whether or not the panels are to be considered in the impervious surface calculations.

Mr. Femrite expressed his concern of the potential for weeds to grow up between the panels and become unsightly and asked if something regarding weed control is needed.

Mr. Leary indicated to the commission that the ordinance as it was developed requires a vegetative cover. He added that a recent small solar energy project requested a gravel base for ease of maintenance but the request was denied due to the language of the ordinance. He added that he had a similar discussion with another solar company earlier in the day in which the solar representative indicated weeds are controlled in order to maximize the efficiency of the system.

Mr. Kurt Anderson stated he would support a condition requiring the applicant to control noxious weeds.

Mr. Bill Anderson stated his belief that the site would be good for a solar system.

There was no further discussion by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Kurt Anderson proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board with the conditions as presented by staff and the additional condition that noxious weeds be controlled. Mr. Bill Anderson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PC 22-15

James & Mary Bauer – Request for review and approval conditional use permit for a Level I Home Occupation for the sales and service of lawn care equipment. The property is located in the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 29, LeRay Township. The property is zoned agriculture and is within the shoreland overlay district.

Mr. Stubbs presented the staff report.

The applicant was present and had no comment.

Mr. Bruender indicated he had been out to the site and that he had asked staff to put the sales component of the request in the report in order for the Planning Commission and County Board to review it. He added that the sales component is rather small.

Mr. Kurt Anderson stated that it is a small business and all need to be treated as individual situations. He added that he was ok with the proposed extended hours of operation.

Mr. Bill Anderson stated he had no issue with the sales proposal.

Mr. Smentek asked if the sales area would be limited.

Mr. Bruender commented that the area is small and if it were to grow it would have further review.

Mr. Leary asked if there would be further review. He added that the approval of the sales component may set things up for additional sales in the future.

Mr. Kurt Anderson asked to have the applicant address the sales issue.

Mr. Bauer stated he has limited funding for the business. Inventory would likely be limited to 5-6 push mowers, 4-5 chainsaws, a couple belly mount mowers and some zero turn mowers. These will be in front of the shop during the day and inside after hours.

Mr. Kurt Anderson asked if the inventory could be contained within the allowable area. Mr. Bauer said yes it could.

Mr. Smentek asked about scrap mowers. Mr. Bauer said they would be taken to a salvage yard.

Mr. Bruender indicated he had no issue with the additional hours of operation 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. Mr. Kurt Anderson and Mr. Jacques agreed.

Mr. Bruender proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board for the sales and service business along with the extended hours as requested and with the conditions as presented by staff. Mr. Kurt Anderson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

PC 23-15

Jean Hefner - Request for review and approval of a conditional use permit to transfer the residential development right from the northwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 22, Danville Township to the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 22, Danville Township. The property is zoned agricultural and conservation.

Mr. Effah presented the staff report.

The applicants were present and had no comment.

There was no public comment and little discussion by the Planning Commission.

Mr. Kurt Anderson proceeded with a motion to forward a recommendation of approval of the request to the County Board with the conditions as presented by staff. Mr. Grams seconded the motion and the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business. Mr. Smentek made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Mr. Bill Anderson and the meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Planning Commission Chair

Date

Planning Commission Secretary

Date