

Public Hearing

On Monday, May 6, 2019, at 6:00 p.m. Planning Commission Chair John Roxbury, Jr., called the Public Hearing for an IUP for a Home Occupation/Self-Employed Insurance Agent, section 3, for Kathy Stoeckel to order.

Joel Minks stated this is an example of how complicated the Township ordinance is when a Planning Commission member doesn't know they need a permit. He doesn't see a problem with someone using their home phone for their business and wanted to know how these permits get policed.

Kathy Stoeckel stated that she has been an agent for 33 years and for the last 25 years she has conducted a home business. She stated that she does not have clients come to her home because she goes to their homes. There is no traffic, no signage or storage.

John Roxbury, Jr. closed the public hearing at 6:07 p.m.

Public Hearing

At 6:15 p.m. Chair John Roxbury, Jr. called the Public Hearing to order.

Joel Minks wanted to know why the expansion on the front of the lots. He feels they should be expanding the commercial zone not putting more limits on it. He stated that if the new members are not comfortable making a decision they should table the issue to better understand it. He stated that once something is in the Ordinance it lasts a long time and is hard to change.

Todd Olin, from Bogart & Peterson, stated that he is working with Betzler Builders and they are considering a plat in the Township that has been designed with cul-de-sacs. He stated that he attended a staff meeting and discussed some ideas and wanted the Planning Commission to see the impacts of what they are considering. He reviewed some drawings of how he would like to develop 106 acres off Aspen Rd and feels that cul-de-sacs are better than loop roads and a more efficient use of the property. With this property they couldn't have a loop road because they wouldn't be able to meet the County standards. He said there are also changes that can be made in designing the cul-de-sacs so they are easier for the snow plows to maintain.

Bill Whitcomb stated that the County has a 150 feet frontage for a 5 acre lot and 200 feet for a 10 acre lot and what the Township is proposing is half the size of the lot, but double the frontage. That way a 2.5 acre lot could only be 363 feet into the property. He stated that when tax base is considered, the larger the frontage, the less lot they will be able to get in there, which means less tax base. Mr. Whitcomb also stated that all the minimum lot sizes are 2.5 acres but the frontages are inconsistent and vary from 200 feet to 300 feet. He stated that if cul-de-sacs are removed, what are the alternatives, because there are times when cul-de-sacs are the only option.

Jesse Jondahl stated that he is looking to purchase the land with Betzler Builders and with no cul-de-sacs they could only get 7 lots on the property rather than 14 lots, and because of the lay of the land, this is exactly what cul-de-sacs are needed for.

Bonnie Nelson stated that she recommends the issue be tabled so everyone can understand all the issues.

John Roxbury, Jr. closed the public hearing at 6:36 p.m.

Regular Meeting

At 6:37 p.m. Planning Commission Chair John Roxbury, Jr., called the Regular Monthly Meeting to order. Other Planning Commission members present were Kathy Stoeckel, Tari Zortman, Cyndi MacDonald, Tanya Lundberg, Cheryl Schimming and Town Board Liaison Dave Persing.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

A motion was made by Kathy Stoeckel and seconded by Cyndi MacDonald to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2019 regular monthly meeting as printed. Motion Carried.

Tari Zortman motioned to recommend approval to the Town Board the IUP for Kathy Stoeckel for a Home Occupation/Self-Employed Insurance Agent, with the following recommendations: 1. If approved use ceases, the I.U.P. will be withdrawn by the Township. 2. If the property is sold, the use and I.U.P. are not transferable and will be forfeited. Cyndi MacDonald seconded the motion. Motion Carried with Kathy Stoeckel abstaining.

John Roxbury, Jr. explained that they are reviewing cul-de-sacs because the Town Board has directed them to do so. This issue has been discussed for months until they felt they had reasonable recommendations, which were submitted to the Board. The Board in turn agreed and therefore a public hearing was held. Now the comments will be forwarded to the Town Board for action.

Joel Minks presented some information on Solar Farms for 63 acres he owns off Baxter Rd. He thinks this is an excellent location for a Solar Farm but knows it not currently listed in the Ordinances. He wanted to know if it is something that can be allowed. He has been in contact with a power company but does not know how many acres they would be interested in, but he would not be interested in selling less than 53 acres. He does not want to sell the southern most part and then be landlocked, because with Baxter Rd and Brickton Rd, he has the option of putting in a service road and developing it into smaller lots. He stated that if the Township is against it, his next option is to look at annexation. If Princeton co-op would like to do this and the Township says no, if he can get the land annexed into the City, then the Township loses the tax base. But it fits his plan to get it developed. He feels that the Township needs to look into the issue because if they want a piece of the tax base, they need to be favorable on these things.

John Roxbury, Jr. stated that he would need to talk to the Town Board because they would have to develop an ordinance to cover that sort of thing and to make sure it complies with the County. He explained that changing Ordinances takes time. Todd McLouth stated that in his experience with Buffalo Township, the Solar Farms are regulated through the Minnesota Energy Commission and neither the Township nor the County Board had anything to say regarding the matter, unless things have changed.

Margaret Reiman stated that there is a Solar Farm in Ramsey and they have native grass planted there.

Stephanie Johnston stated that she works for a company that does landscaping for some Solar Farms and she feels that they are a total eyesore, and they usually require some trees to be planted around them. She was also concerned about where all the batteries go once the life of the panels are done.

Tari Zortman stated that she would be interested in learning the Vice-Chair position. Cheryl Schimming motioned to appoint Tari Zortman as Vice-Chair. Kathy Stoeckel seconded the motion. Motion Carried.

Open Forum

Nancy Moan stated that she would like to see the Ordinances online. The Clerk stated that she would check with the County about adding it to their webpage.

There was some confusion among both PC members and the public in regards to the process of changing ordinances and who wants to see them changed. They felt as if the possible changes were not reviewed by qualified sources and wanted to know why they couldn't set parameters rather than say cul-de-sacs are not allowed. They felt as is this was not a professional opinion. The Chairman became frustrated at the repetitive nature of the discussion.

The Township Engineer stated that he feels cul-de-sacs are a valuable planning tool and there are ways to design them to be conducive to plowing. Jason Betzler explained that if they want the Township to grow, they should work with the developers or do they want to keep the same Princeton they've had for the last 30 years. Tari Zortman stated that she actually thinks they can have both. Mr. Betzler stated that not allowing cul-de-sacs would be the worst thing for their community.

Todd Olin stated that the island idea for roads that some Townships have went with are a maintenance nightmare. Joel Minks stated that the plows can turn the blade and throw the snow anywhere they want.

Joel Minks stated that he was offended because he felt the Chairman was shutting down the public.

Cheryl Schimming stated that she is there to listen and since some of the members are new, maybe they need to consider some of the questions brought up like how was the decision made to eliminate cul-de-sacs. If the Planning Commission made a mistake, it's OK, they can go back and examine it further before something is recommended to the Board.

Tari Zortman stated that they should have something to replace cul-de-sacs if they want to eliminate them.

Bill Whitcomb stated that he thinks the Moratorium should be lifted and they can continue to discuss it. Joel Minks agreed and stated that the Board can keep the Moratorium on for 10 years and thinks that the reasons of them being dangerous or more costly to maintain are awfully poor to base long term planning on.

Jason Betzler stated that right now there is basically no residential development other than a simple land split and that is the worst thing for your community. They are wasting good buildable land.

Cyndi MacDonald stated that she is there to listen and feels that John Roxbury Jr. had a bit of a tantrum. Mr. Roxbury stated that he has been hearing the same thing regarding the issue for 2 years.

Joel Minks stated that ordinance changes should not take that long.

Tari Zortman stated that she feels the Township can have both, rural and growth.

Cyndi MacDonald stated that she doesn't think the Board wants the Township to grow, because they like it rural. She didn't move into rural, she moved into a house that just happen to be here.

Kathy Stoeckel stated that the Board needs to keep in mind that they are representing 2200 people and this right now is a minority group that want to put in a housing market because it is their livelihood. But that doesn't mean that the whole township agrees with them so no one should take sides too quickly.

Bill Whitcomb stated that this is a Rural Community but this area is residential, not 100 homes, but 14 lots in residential land. He feels that soil conditions come into play because it is a lot more expensive to build roads in heavy soils. The residential areas are in the sand and that's where they should keep them because he doesn't want 100 homes north of him.

Jason Betzler stated that farm ground should stay that way because homes do not do well in those soils. They should not be developing Ag land but this is residential.

Kathy Stoeckel motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:35 p.m. Cyndi MacDonald seconded the motion. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Connie Wubben
Clerk/Treasurer

Attendees: Nancy Moan, Joel Minks, Stephanie Johnston, Bonnie Nelson, Jason Betzler, Todd Olin, Jesse Jondahl, Margaret Reiman, Bill Whitcomb