

# MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF OMRO PLANNING COMMISSION

Omro Town Hall, 4205 Rivermoor Road, Omro, WI

July 13, 2023

6:30 P.M.

Notice of this meeting was posted on the Town of Omro Web Page and the posting board at the Omro Town Hall. It was mailed to the Omro Herald and the Oshkosh Northwestern.

Present: Commission Chairman Bruce Roskom, Vice-Chair Brian Noe, Commissioners Joy Schwarz, Phil Ertmer, Allen Silverthorn, and PC Secretary Cheryl Gardner. Commissioners Larry Remer and Russ Volp were excused.

Chairman Bruce Roskom called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M.

## **Approve Minutes:**

MOTION: Phil Ertmer moved to approve the minutes of June 15, 2023. Joy Schwarz seconded the motion. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

## **Announcements and Reports:**

Vice Chair Noe reported on the discussion between Chet Wesenberg and the City of Omro. Mr. Wesenberg had approached the City of Omro and asked if they would annex the land he owns and re-zone it as "Industrial". Vice Chair Noe is uncomfortable with this approach because of the planning that has been in place to limit industrial zoning to certain areas. Chairman Roskom reminded the commissioners that planning for the Town directs land use, and that the zoning of properties has been "thought out" and included in Comprehensive Plans. Usage can't be changed and boundaries can't be moved without good reason and a permanent change to the zoning. It also opens the door for more land-use changes to other properties which may be undesirable. This property has been used for business for some time in violation of the current zoning. Vice Chair Noe said he will discuss this matter at the next Town Board meeting.

## **Public Comment Items**

None.

## **Non-Public Comment Items**

## **Discussion/Informational Items**

### **Continue Discussion on Potential Overlay District/Development Standards within Hwy 21 Corridor**

Chair Roskom opened the "discussion by calling attention to the memorandum of March 9, 2023. This three-page document outlined some standards which the Planning Commission could use to direct growth by using an "Overlay District" for the land within ½ miles beyond the public right-of-way of both sides of USH 21. This district will "act in conjunction with the underlying zoning district or districts." Its purpose is "to establish additional requirements superimposed on the underlying standard zoning district in order to address the challenges presented by USH 21."

Chair Roskom again summarized that the reason for such a district is to establish consistency for developers in our Town. It allows us to have some control over the end product while allowing new growth. He suggested connecting the ordinance to the Site Plan of the Municipal Code. He explained that specific guidelines for developers removes arbitrariness and gives a minimum standard for builders to follow. Chair Roskom used the example of a Town resident which brought a "civil rights" case against the Town because he thought that he was being treated differently. The more general standards invite more of such lawsuits.

Chair Roskom went on to suggest having sidewalks integrated into the landscaping plan of businesses along USH 21 since many walkers, joggers, and bicyclists utilize the roads on the north side of 21. One idea is to implement a 30% landscaping rule which sets a minimum standard for the amount of land for trees and yard space on the business's property. Setbacks, retaining ponds and the types of trees to be prohibited were then discussed by the commissioners. Commissioner Schwarz talked about the color of buildings which might be specified to promote consistency. Vice Chair Noe proposed making an "allowed" list of trees to "be used for landscaping. Commissioner Silverthorn agreed that a plan to direct development with specific guidelines would be helpful for builders while protecting the Town.

Another topic brought up by Commissioner Schwarz was "billboards". Vice Chair Noe reminded the PC that the county sign controls are different in different zoning areas, and that currently, no off-premise signs are allowed in the Town. He suggested that we may want to restrict business signs which might include "flashing" lights or electronic billboards. Many commissioners agreed that they are distracting, annoying, and unsafe.

Discussed next were the actual buildings themselves and what we would like to allow in terms of size, color, structure, and general appearance. Many commissioners agreed that long, plain walls are an eyesore, and that a mixture of textures and materials are more pleasing in appearance

Retaining ponds were discussed next. Vice Chair Noe stated that one "regional" large pond is more efficient/desirable than many smaller ponds. Commissioner Silverthorn asked if the pond is part of the landscape plan. Chair Roskom reminded the commissioners that the surface area of the pond is not included in the 30% landscaping requirement. Also discussed were other existing ponds near the Town of Omro and their maintenance. Vice Chair Noe brought up the use of ponds in apartment developments and the apparent need for more multi-family housing.

Snow storage was discussed next, especially in relation to businesses and apartments. Vice Chair Noe stated that it cannot be put in ponds or parking areas. Chair Roskom said that the Site plan should show the placement of snow after plowing.

The topics of trails, sidewalks, and their connection between businesses were addressed next. Vice Chair Noe stressed that this is important as the area develops and the commissioners agreed that this concept is popular where it is implemented.

Lighting was discussed next. Chair Roskom stressed that lights can't shine in the faces of people as they drive by. Things that we don't want to see should be defined, according to Vice Chair Noe. It seemed to be the general consensus that too much bright lighting is undesirable and annoying to nearby residents.

Next, building heights were briefly discussed. This discussion seg-wayed into zoning and the allowed land uses within the corridor. Currently, no industrial zoning is mapped in the corridor, but Chair

Roskom said that a CUP could allow some light industrial to operate in the future. This gives the Town control for each individual case. He stated that a CUP stays with the land.

## **2. Discuss Potential Future Grant Application Projects**

Vice Chair Noe informed the PC that some grant money is available for the Town to apply to projects. These would be "Legacy Projects" which should be well-planned and could provide the Town with lasting benefits. The three categories are "1. Health & Human Services, 2. Economic Development/Housing, and 3. Veterans' Transitional Housing". These funds are available through 2026. The commissioners discussed the pros and cons of several projects which could utilize these funds, but agreed that some thought and planning must take place before applying for the money. Chair Roskom said that a grant for a Town trail may be a viable project along the south side of USH 2. Vice Chair Noe said that he would do some more research on this.

### **Agenda Items for Next Meeting**

Vice Chair Noe stated that the Springbrook project (CSM) may be discussed which is a plan to create a Raptor Rescue facility. A zoning change will be needed.

### **Adjournment:**

MOTION: Allen Silverthorn moved to adjourn. Phil Ertmer seconded the motion. Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote.

This meeting adjourned at 8:10 P.M.

Minutes by

Cheryl Gardner/Recording Secretary