

# Plan Commission & Task Force Minutes

## Town of Washburn

Town Hall

Tuesday, June 4, 2024

**Commission members present:** Kim Bro (chair), Cyndi Belanger (secretary), Jim Park (town board representative).

**Commission members absent:** Hallie Sandberg, Tim Schwenzfeier (vice chair).

**Planning Task Force members present:** Terri Bahe, Tom Cogger, Charmaine Swan, Caroline Twombly, Marieke Van Donkersgoed, Dennis Weibel.

**Others present (at meeting):** Kurt Kiehne.

**Others present (at site visit):** Mike Harvey (town road superintendent), Elizabeth Post (permit applicant).

1. Chairman Bro called the meeting of the commission to order at 7:00 P.M. and verified its legal notification (posted at town hall and Tetzner Dairy) on May 31, 2024 and on town website on May 30.
2. The minutes of the March 10, 2024 meeting were approved (Cyndi moves, Jim seconds).
3. Prior to the meeting at 6:15 P.M., the commission conducted a site visit with Elizabeth Post at her property (76151 Paulson Rd). Elizabeth had placed wire flags to mark the perimeter of her proposed driveway with a tee turnaround west of a proposed 1-story home. The drive will extend to a proposed shop building east of the house. The proposed driveway and buildings are on a relatively level former glacial beach on a buried glacial moraine. It connects to a steep, existing private access road off of Paulson Rd. The hillside consists of sand-over-clay soil that is highly erodible, and the owners of the private road have had to take frequent measures to minimize gulying of the road ditch. The owner proposed constructing a catch basin at the uphill side of the drive entrance with flow across 2-4" rock at the driveway apron. Mike Harvey felt that the proposed road ditch design would wash out in a heavy rain. Instead, he recommends a 18"x40' culvert in an angle from the road ditch at the uphill side to the owners property on the downhill side. To prevent gulying at the culvert outlet, the owner should construct a 6.5' x 8' check dam structure. The forebay at the outlet should be lined with a heavy nonwoven felt fabric that will withstand a rock lining around the edge and allow runoff to seep into the soil without washing the sandy surface soil.. The rock at the downslope end should distribute runoff evenly across the 6.5' edge so that the natural ground cover at the outlet will hold the soil in place. The driveway should have an "outsloped design" that allows spring melt water to flow evenly across the driveway rather than be captured in a driveway ditch. The purpose is to maintain the natural sheet flow of runoff across the sandy landscape without forming gullies.
4. The commission reviewed the driveway permit application and preliminary development plan for Elizabeth post on her 8.3-acre parcel in a Forestry-1 zoning district ((parts of SW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  + NW $\frac{1}{4}$ SW $\frac{1}{4}$  Section 33 T.49N R.5W; former Tax ID #31158 across from 76165 Paulson Rd). The proposed driveway extends 290' northeast from a north-south private access road. The owner proposes 6" base of 2-minus gravel that will be compacted as construction occurs. After construction of the buildings, 4" of medium well-graded, crushed, fractured rock will be added. Rather than the driveway entrance design specified on the permit application, the commission recommends a culvert with end walls and downslope end protection as recommended above by the town road superintendent. Because the proposed driveway connects to an especially steep portion of the private access road that is subject to gulying in heavy rain, the commission recommends that the town board make permit approval conditional on the owner promptly repairing any washout that may occur at the driveway entrance. The design recommended by the superintendent is expected to slow the erosiveness of road ditch runoff, but some additional measures may be required to maintain accessibility to residences farther uphill.

With these recommended changes, the commission recommends (Jim moves, Cyndi seconds) that the town board approve the driveway permit. Because the proposed buildings are set back approximately 300 feet from Paulson Road with a hillside forest between the road and the house, the project will retain the

forested character of the area (Policy 8.1.e). Because the roadbed and buildings are set back from the steep edge of the terrace of transitional soils, the plan accommodates the potential for slumps (pp.7-22, 8-24). Because the proposed construction area is a relatively level former glacial beach of sand over clay with much natural ground cover vegetation, the proposed project, with the recommended modifications should accommodate the drainage, visibility, and roadbed requirements of the Town Driveway Ordinance.

5. The members of the commission and Plan Update Task Force introduced themselves. They reviewed the purpose of the comprehensive plan: retain the rural character of the town; protected the high quality streams and forests, retain agricultural lands, focus residential development near paved roads closer to Highway 13, and retain the neighborliness of a small town.

The group also discussed handouts Kim had distributed regarding the community planning process and experience with the current plan. Kim noted that the creation of the town plan commission and the review process for driveways and land use decisions are the primary means for implementing policies. The primary failure of the plan has been in the fragmentation of agricultural and forest land into parcels that are too small for agriculture and forestry. Typically, the creation of parcels of less than 20 acres occurs before the town is made aware of their creation. The only lands that are limited to more than a 4.5-acre minimum size are publicly owned forest lands. Currently, the town has not implemented any steps to limit the fragmentation of forested and agricultural lands.

Tom mentioned that another dimension of “rural character” is retaining dark night skies. This policy likely was not included in the current plan because the plan committee did not know how to implement it. Kim mentioned the “Action Steps” page that the City of Bayfield used when it updated its comprehensive plan. Such an approach gets around the nebulous “ongoing” timeline listed in the “Implementation” chapter of the town’s current plan. One “action steps” example from the City of Bayfield is “creating a unified network of walking trails.” In that case, much of the leadership for the policy comes from a volunteer citizen’s group. There are creative ways for the town to implement policies without increasing the burden on elected officials.

6. The group approved the schedule of future meetings for updating the comprehensive plan: Monday, July 8, Tuesday, August 6, Monday, September 9, Tuesday, October 1, Sunday, November 10, Tuesday, December 3, Tuesday, January 7, 2025, and Tuesday, February 4 (all at 7:00 P.M. at the town hall. There may need to be some revisions if we are unable to have a quorum of plan commission members or if conditions required for site visits require a change. Each meeting will address about two chapters of the plan. The updated county plan can serve as a point of comparison for updating the town plan. The goal will be to bring Northwest Regional Planning Commission consultants into the process in the fall and to have a plan ready for a public hearing by February 2025.
7. The group reviewed the results of the community survey conducted for the plan in 2006 and discussed whether there now may be more effective and dynamic methods. Now that the town has a website and a system of notifying community members of town events, it may be possible to create a “Plan Update” tab, and to notify community members of key issues about which the task force is seeking public input. There may be issue fact sheets to brief community members and specific feedback requests (e.g., Survey Monkey) to solicit community perspectives. The task force discussed mailing a postcard notice to all resident households to gather email addresses of those who wish to stay informed and engaged in the task force’s work. Kim will ask the town board about available options.
8. Kim announced that he and Doug Belanger estimated that 3,000 cubic yards of clay are needed to repair the closed landfill cap.
9. The meeting adjourned at 8:37 P.M. (Cyndi moves, Jim seconds).

Draft submitted by: Kenneth Bro, Chair, Town of Washburn Plan Commission (June 10, 2024).

## **Plan Commission Report**

The commission recommends that the town board approve the driveway permit for Elizabeth Post contingent on installing a 40'x18" culvert from the upslope road ditch on the private access road to the owner's property downslope with a check dam at the outfall. The commission also recommends that approval be contingent on the owner agreeing to install any additional measure to slow runoff and prevent gullying if future heavy rains cause a washout at the driveway entrance.

The commission recommends that the town board approve creating a 'Plan Update' tab on the town's website and approve a postcard mailing to town residents in late summer to facilitate email notification of key planning issues and actions.