

Plan Commission & Task Force Minutes

Town of Washburn

Town Hall

Tuesday, July 8, 2024

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

Commission members absent: none.

Planning Task Force members present: Tom Cogger, Caroline Twombly, Dennis Weibel.

Planning Task Force members absent: Terri Bahe, Charmaine Swan, Marieke Van Donkersgoed.

Others present (at meeting): Kodi Drinken.

Others present (at site visit): Kodi Drinken (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) and on town website on June 29.
2. The minutes of the June 4, 2024 meeting were approved (Cyndi moves, Jim seconds).
3. Prior to the meeting at 6:20 P.M., the commission conducted a site visit with Kodi Drinken at his residence (29490 County Hwy C). The level property is on sand-over-clay soils. While the sand currently is firm, Tim noted that his experience in building nearby is that, with very shallow depth to the water table in spring, an emergency vehicle would easily bog down in the soil off of the driveway. An area of load-bearing material (13-foot x 12-foot wide (east) with 25-foot turning radius sides) is needed on the east side of the existing paved driveway apron to provide an adequate tee turnaround. The commission advised Kodi to submit a driveway permit application agreeing to provide an extension for the tee. There are some plantings of trees and shrubs between the house and the county highway. Several smaller plantings near the highway appear to be recent.
4. The commission reviewed the county Class A Special Use Permit Application for Kodi and Amanda Drinken to use their house as a short-term rental unit on their 10-acre parcel in an Agriculture 1 zoning district (E½E½SE¼SW¼ Section 26 T.49N R.5W; Tax ID #31008; 29490 County Hwy C). The commission reviewed the conditions that the county Planning and Zoning Committee will ask the county board to approve later this month (no excessive noise, no fireworks, occupants limited to capacity of sanitary system, no recreational vehicles campers or tents for more occupants, a 24-hour contact person on file in case of problems, and compliance with all state and local regulations. In addition, the county health department conducts annual reviews regarding state health requirements and requires annual renewal of county permits. The commission recommends (Cyndi moves, Tim seconds) that the town board recommend approval of the short-term rental permit contingent on meeting the requirements listed in the proposed amendment to the county zoning ordinance section on short-term rentals and on the applicant providing a tee turnaround to assure sufficient access for emergency vehicles. The commission also recommends (Tim moves, Cyndi seconds) that the town board require the owner to apply for a town driveway permit agreeing to provide a tee turnaround as specified at the site visit.
5. The members of the commission and Plan Update Task Force reviewed historical population and housing data and projections to 2040 for the town, the City of Washburn, nearby towns, and Bayfield County. The population of the city is projected to decline 12%. The town population is projected to increase 10%, and the county is projected to increase 16%. The number of housing units is projected to increase (town: 22%, city: 7%, and county: 14%). The proportion of elderly residents is increasing. The implications is that there will be more houses with fewer residents per house, increasing needs for senior citizens, and fewer working-age residents to provide services to a dispersed, elderly population. With the expansion of broadband internet, there will be more residents who want a rural lifestyle and who can work remotely from home. There also appears to be an increasing trend of either multigenerational households or of

parents, children and grandchildren living in close proximity. The current zoning preference of five acres per household is tending to lead to greater fragmentation of private forest and agricultural lands. A barrier to attracting younger residents is the lack in our area of affordable housing for rent of for first-time buyers.

6. The group also discussed the relationships between the town and nearby cities. The cities provide employment, shopping, commercial and industrial services, schools, libraries, and community centers. Our town is a source of forest products, wildlife, fisheries, agricultural produce, natural scenery, and outdoor recreation – not just for residents, but also for urban dwellers near and far. These resources not only serve residents but contribute significantly to the tourist economy of the region. Tourist demand for short-term rental houses is one of the barriers to longer term rental housing. While the town roads are used increasingly by ATVs and UTVs, there also is an opportunity to provide greater opportunities for bikers and hikers. There are permanent off-road trail networks for motorized vehicles, but the Washburn area does not have an equivalent of the Bayfield Area Trails network. The privately owned soccer fields in the town are an indication of the possibility for increasing community gathering and recreational activity in the open spaces provided by our town.
7. Kim mentioned that the City of Washburn will draft a request for bids to excavate more clay for the closed landfill from the town’s previous clay source area and for restoring the landfill cap. The town requested bids for mowing this summer.
8. Kim mentioned that the town board approved a postcard mailing to residents in August to invite more community engagement in the plan update process. The town also approved a MailChimp notification of those who wish to be informed of the planning meetings. Kim shared the Ashland Photo Challenge example of community members submitting photos of “Things of which we are proud,” “Things we should keep,” and “Things that can be improved.”
9. Cyndi announced that US Representative Tom Tiffany is seeking support for a proposal to make the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and National Park. It was not clear what the real benefits of the proposal are.
10. The meeting adjourned at 8:43 P.M. (Tim moves, Cyndi seconds).

Draft submitted by: Kenneth Bro, Chair, Town of Washburn Plan Commission (July 9, 2024).

Plan Commission Report

The commission recommends that the town board recommend county approval of the Class A Special Use Permit for Kodi and Amanda Drunken to have a short-term rental with the conditions proposed for the county zoning ordinance amendment for short-term rentals and with providing adequate driveway access for emergency vehicles.