
CITY OF LITTLE FALLS

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT/ PLANNING COMMISSION

February 8, 2016



AGENDA
PLANNING COMMISSION
Conference Room, City Hall
February 8, 2016, 6:30 p.m.

P	A	Member	P	A	Member
		Kleinschmidt, James			Schilling, Kara
		Esse, Robert			Schulte, Ray
		Gosiak, Frank			Silbernick, Keith
		Hanfler, Jeremy			Oleson, Ben (Zoning Official)
					Kimman, Greg (City Engineer)

CALL TO ORDER: Planning Commission Chairperson

NOMINATION AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary

ADOPT THE AGENDA: February 8, 2016

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: January 11, 2016

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1) None

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1) Discussion – Regulation of Land Uses

NEW BUSINESS:

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Monday, March 14, 2016

ADJOURNMENT:

MINUTES
PLANNING COMMISSION
 Conference Room, City Hall
 January 11, 2016, 6:30 p.m.

P	A	Member	P	A	Member
		(vacant)	X		Schilling, Kara
X		Esse, Robert	X		Schulte, Ray
X		Gosiak, Frank	X		Silbernack, Keith
X		Hanfler, Jeremy	X		Oleson, Ben (Zoning Official)
			X		Kimman, Greg (City Engineer)

CALL TO ORDER The Planning Commission Meeting was called to order by Frank Gosiak, Planning Commission Chairperson, at 6:30 p.m.

ADOPT THE AGENDA: A motion was made by Hanfler, seconded by Silbernack to adopt the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Schulte, seconded by Silbernack to adopt the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1) None

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1) Discussion – Allowing for construction of homes on small lots / “Tiny Homes”

There was discussion about whether the City should consider amending its ordinances to allow one or both of two things 1) whether the City’s minimum required dwelling size (either 24’ x 24’ or 24’ x 30’ depending on the section of ordinance) should be reduced; and 2) whether the City should allow development of smaller lots (lots less than 56 feet wide in the R-1 district and less than 42 feet wide in the R-2 or R-3 districts). After discussion the Planning Commission consensus was to recommend that the City not change existing city code in relation to minimum lot sizes for construction of dwellings nor the minimum dimensions required for new dwellings. This recommendation is based on the following:

1. The number of vacant lots in the city that do not meet the minimum width or size standard for construction of a dwelling is small – about 25 total. Six of these lots are already owned by the City or the HRA.
2. The City and its HRA have had a long-standing policy of attempting to take small lots and combine them with adjacent lots. Often this involves tearing down dilapidated housing on one of the lots. The goal of these efforts has much to do with improving the tax base of the community and eliminating dangerous or dilapidated housing that tends to detract from a neighborhood.
3. The current City Code does allow for smaller homes on smaller lots in the R-4 district. The language in this section could be improved to clarify that “tiny homes” are allowed within this district (i.e. as part of a development similar to a mobile home park), but there are opportunities for such developments that exist within the current City Code and opportunities to request rezoning of property to an R-4 district should someone want to create a development of this type.

NEW BUSINESS:

NEXT REGULAR MEETING: Monday, February 8, 2016

ADJOURNMENT: A motion was made by Schulte, seconded by Schilling to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m. Motion carried.

STAFF REPORT

Issue: Regulation of Land Uses

Background Information: One of the basic elements of a zoning ordinance is how it regulates the use of land – whether someone can use their land for residential housing, commercial development, industrial development, etc...

Traditionally, a zoning ordinance will create separate zoning districts so that it can allow certain uses in one part of a community but not others. Like many other communities, Little Falls creates at least three basic types of zoning districts – residential, commercial and industrial.

Regulating land uses in this manner allows a community to separate uses that are likely to conflict with each other and possibly reduce property values or at least reduce the enjoyment of one's land. For instance, if a noisy industrial factory that pollutes the air and has lots of heavy truck traffic moves onto a lot next to my residential home, it is likely that my enjoyment of my home will be lessened and its value for residential housing will drop.

A number of questions arise in trying to figure out what types of land uses will be allowed in each zoning district. These include:

1. Should “higher” types of zoning districts also allow for the same uses allowed in “lower” zoning districts? Or should each zoning district be treated as completely separate with their own unique lists of allowed uses?
 - a. Little Falls currently uses a “ladder” style of zoning – uses allowed in the “lowest” zoning district (R-1) is generally also allowed in R2 (plus a few other uses). Those allowed in R-2 are also allowed in R-3 (plus a few other uses).
 - b. This “ladder” structure continues into the Business Districts and then into the Industrial Districts. So any uses in the R-3 district are generally allowed in the B-1 district.
 - c. This type of structure allows more flexibility to landowners, but also can lead to more conflict.
 - d. The alternative (for instance – not allowing residential uses in industrial districts) can help prevent conflict, but may also be more restrictive than the community actually desires.
2. In whatever list of uses is created for each zoning district, how should those uses not specifically listed be addressed?
 - a. Anything not listed is considered to be prohibited. Changing the list of allowed uses requires an ordinance amendment.
 - b. Anything not listed can be considered to be allowed if it is similar in nature to some other allowed use. Generally, this is decided by the Planning Commission (i.e. “any uses not specifically listed may be approved by the Planning Commission as a conditional or interim use

provided that it is deemed similar to other permitted, conditional or interim uses and otherwise compatible with the intent of the zoning district.”)

Planning Commission Action: At this time, the issue is only for discussion. If the Planning Commission feels that it would like to initiate an ordinance amendment process regarding how zoning districts are the list of allowed/conditional/interim uses are addressed in the Ordinance, it can direct the Staff to do so. If it would like Staff to research specific questions relating to this issue, it can do so as well.