

GRANITE COUNTY PLANNING BOARD

Public Monthly Meeting

Courthouse Courtroom

220 N. Sansome Street, Philipsburg

May 2, 2019 6:00 p.m.

Present:

Granite County Planning Board Members: A.J. Michnevich President, Gail Leeper and Tom Rue

Planning Board Staff: Linda Bouck, Granite County Planning Director

Guests: Shirley Beck, Steve Immenschuh, Tori Olson Jenner, Jim Jenner, Ben Larson, Anna Provost, Dave Schroeder, Carl Sundstrom

I: Call to Order

President A.J. Michnevich called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Board and Staff introduced themselves. It was noted the Board did not have a quorum. Due to this the Board was unable to take official action on any of the agenda items.

II: Pledge of Allegiance

III. A. Growth Policy –Public Hearing for Amendments to Town of Philipsburg Section of the Growth Policy

Planning Director Linda Bouck gave a brief overview of the proposed amendments. She stated most of the changes are not substantial except for one change which would allow for the Town of Phillipsburg to potentially zone. It was explained the addition of a zoning statement within the Growth Policy does not institute zoning. It opens the door for a discussion to be held about zoning and for the government to potentially implement zoning. In order to implement zoning a statement has to be placed in the Growth Policy stating the intent to zone. Before a zoning district could be implemented an in-depth public process would need to be completed.

A.J. Michnevich opened the public hearing for the Town of Philipsburg Section of the Growth Policy.

Steve Immenschuh said people love Philipsburg for what it is and they don't want to see a lot of change made to the Town. He believes growth is needed but it should be good growth that doesn't detract from what's existing. He would like to see ordered growth and not a booming growth. He added regulations for protecting Philipsburg should be carefully looked at.

Shirley Beck asked who had requested the changes to the Growth Policy. Bouck stated the amendments were drafted and presented by the Town Council of Philipsburg.

Carl Sundstrom, a Councilman on the Town Council of Philipsburg, explained every 5 years the Towns and County are to review and if needed submit changes to the Growth Policy. The Town Council reviewed the document and these are the changes they believe are necessary. A.J. Michnevich asked if the Town had a good turn-out for the meetings when they were drafting proposed changes. Carl Sundstrom said they did not. He stated the Council is trying to look out for good growth and to maintain the integrity of the existing Town.

Jim Jenner said a group within Philipsburg has recently completed a survey regarding issues within the Town. One of the questions asked “Should there be protection for the National Historic District in Philipsburg”. Eighty-two percent of the people who responded stated they believe the historic district should be protected. He said a zoning district would be protective for the Historic District. He noted a lot of people have put a lot of money, time and sweat equity into restoring the buildings within the 87 acre historic district. The Philipsburg Historic District has received accolades for being completed to reflect an authentic restoration of the buildings. Jenner stated now that those restorations have been completed, the properties are starting to be sold and the Town wants to see those buildings maintained and kept as they have been restored.

A.J. Michnevich believes a zoning district would work in Philipsburg even though it hasn't been able to work in other areas of the County. He questioned whether some of the zoning discussions should be held during the summer months when the part-time residents return. It was questioned whether the people that should be heard from are the permanent residents. All parties need to have a say in the process.

Gail Leeper stated Drummond does not have any zoning currently. She stated there is a place for zoning and noted it comes with trade-offs. If someone comes in who is going to provide jobs that is a good thing but some oversight of the land also needs to be done. Growth is good, but having some rules in place keeps from having to struggle with cleaning up problems created from lack of oversight. She added that the Town needs to keep in mind that there will be additional costs related to enforcing regulations as well.

Ben Larson said the authenticity of Philipsburg is what sells the Town. However the locals need to be able to live here as well. Guidelines should be aimed at and geared for the people who are living here year-round. He stated short term rentals do not provide or add to the authenticity of the Town.

Jim Jenner added it is imperative to get some control on vacation rentals. So many people are doing VRBO (vacation rental by owner) or Airbnb (air bed and breakfast) both of which are services that connect homeowners hoping to lease out space with customers looking for short-term rentals. This is not only taking business away from local motels but it also takes potential long-term rentals for permanent residents off the market. VRBO and Airbnb also are not licensed or inspected and they do not contribute to bed tax funds, which provide funds back to the local community. He noted that within 20 miles of Philipsburg there are approximately 90 VRBO and Airbnb. These rentals are selling the authenticity of the community while not giving anything back in return.

Steve Immenschuh stated the town needs to have affordable long –term rentals for residents. He also pointed out that VRBO and Airbnb can be a challenge for public safety services. He added part-time residents don't put kids in the school or participate in the community.

Shirley Beck asked if there would be a grandfather clause for VRBO and Airbnb already in effect. Bouck stated some kind of allowance would need to be given for existing operations, with specifics on when that exemption would be removed due to inactivity. Beck said those in the Town who employ people need affordable housing for employees. Right now that falls on the permanent residents to provide. She said VRBOs and Airbnb is being utilized by a lot of people who purchased a piece of property in Philipsburg hoping to retire to the Town in the future. They usually work on the property in the summers and have now found a way to fund projects or pay mortgages by doing VRBOs and Airbnb. Not all of the people using these options rent the entire year – some are just doing a few months a year. She believes some consideration needs to be given to people in this situation.

Tom Rue stated VRBO and Airbnb have their place and they are not all bad but they do need to be thoughtfully regulated. He also suggested the Town of Philipsburg look to incorporate something about short-term rentals in the vision statement at the beginning of the Growth Policy. Rue asked if the County could contact Susan Swimley, a land use attorney who works for Montana Association of Counties, and ask her if she has any sample regulations for regulating VRBOs and Airbnb. Bouck stated she would contact Susan Swimley on this issue.

There being no further comments, President Michnevich tabled the public hearing until the June meeting. As no quorum was in attendance official action could not be taken on this topic. The public hearing will be resumed on June 6, 2019.

III. B. – Growth Policy –Discussion of Addition of Appendix G: Granite County to Invoke Coordination Status to Influence Federal and State Land Use

The Planning Board asked if anyone was present to represent the Forest Management Advisory Committee (FMAC). It was noted that no one was present from the FMAC Group. Tom Rue said he had questions about what FMAC was and what they were trying to accomplish with the addition the Growth Policy. Linda Bouck stated FMAC is developing policies, guidelines and regulations in order to implement the coordination process between local, state and federal government agencies regarding public lands. Bouck said Tom Sanders had also indicated he had some questions and concerns about the FMAC addition when he left a message stating he could not attend the meeting tonight.

Tom Rue asked that the FMAC agenda items be tabled to next month's agenda since no quorum was in attendance. He asked that a representative of FMAC be contacted so they could attend and discuss this item. The Board agreed to postpone this agenda item and the following agenda item - III.C. Set Public Hearing Date for Appendix G.

IV. Development of County Road List – Drummond Area - Including Areas North and West of Drummond

The Board held a work session on developing a County Road List. The Board worked on classifying roads in the Drummond area as well as areas north and west of Drummond, in the following townships and ranges:

T11N R12W; T11N R13W; T11N R14W; T11N R15W; T11N R16W; T12N R13W; T12N R14W; T12N R15W. Reclassifications of some of the roads were made.

As no quorum was present, the Board asked that this item be pushed to the next meeting.

VI. Minutes – April 4, 2019

The Board was unable to act on the minutes of April 4, 2019, due to the lack of a quorum.

The Board asked that the Minutes for April 4, 2019, be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

VII. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

VI. Miscellaneous

There was no miscellaneous business.

VII. Adjourn

Gail Leeper requested to adjourn the meeting. The Board unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Minutes approved on June 6, 2019

A.J. Michnevich