

ATHENS TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

Minutes of February 19, 2015

Athens Township Government Center

1. *Pledge of Allegiance:* The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
2. *Roll Call:* The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Lyle Reynolds. Members present were Jake Carpenter, Dan Woodfill, Lyle Reynolds, Cindy Anderson, Craig Bjorklund and Dave Henderson. Absent was Marlys Balfany. Also present were Jim & Carolyn Braun, Staff Members. Guests included Cindy Reynolds, Russ & Ann Mann, Mr. & Mrs. Brennan Cox and Brennan's Father.
3. *Minutes of January 22, 2015:* Jake Carpenter questioned if he made a motion in the "Public Hearing" segment of the minutes. Jim Braun explained that it sounded like him on the tape and that he would review the tape and correct it. A motion to approve the minutes with possible correction was made by Dave Henderson, seconded by Dan Woodfill. Motion carried unanimously.
4. *Open Forum:* No one was on hand for the Open Forum portion of the meeting.
5. *Public Hearing Continued: Request for Zoning Amendment related to Accessory Buildings.*

This item was continued from the January Planning Commission Meeting. The questions is should the Township change the code to allow up to 2400 square foot accessory structures to be built on two to five acre parcels. This is a change from the 2 ½ acres that was required in the past. The two acre requirement fits the code better as the minimum lot size allowed is two acres.

Carolyn went on to say that the proposed change is not to fix the problem for the Mickelson's alone. Jim Braun remarked at a prior meeting that in the years he has been the Zoning Administrator close to twenty-five parcel owners wanted to build larger than 1200 square feet accessory structures on less than 2 ½ acres and were not allowed to do so. Jim feels that it shows that there is a problem with the size restriction.

Carolyn has checked with other jurisdictions surrounding Athens Township and found that East Bethel has just changed their code to allow 2400 square feet

structures on parcels two acres or more. Isanti County has changed their code to allow any size accessory structures on one acre and more sized lots. This change would bring the Township more in line to what is going on in the other jurisdictions.

Carolyn Braun did add that if the amendment is approved she would suggest that attached garages be held to 1000 square feet or the size of the footprint of the living space of the main floor of the dwelling.

Chairman Reynolds opened the public hearing to the audience for comment: Russ Mann commented that he thought it would be a good idea. He feels that a lot of the stuff sitting outside of the building in Riverside Estates would have a place in a bigger building if it would be made possible.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Dan Woodfill, seconded by Cindy Anderson. Motion carried unanimously at 7:17 p.m.

After some brief discussion and clarification Dan Woodfill made a motion to approve the amendment, seconded by Dave Henderson.

Chairman Reynolds asked that a "Roll Call Vote" be taken.

Jake Carpenter	aye
Dan Woodfill	aye
Lyle Reynolds	aye
Cindy Anderson	aye
Craig Bjorklund	aye
Dave Henderson	aye

Motion to approve the amendment carries unanimously. (See Enclosed Amendment)

7. *New Business: Brennan Cox – Information on potential development of historic theme park:*

Brennan Cox has purchased the Thomas Bartz parcel at 27498 Polk Street Northeast, Isanti, Minnesota. The parcel is in the Northeast Quarter of Section Six just south of the border with Isanti Township. The parcel contains 56 acres much of which is swamp and lowlands.

Brennan wants to establish an "Historic Farm Theme Park" Even though there are no historic structures left on the home site except a old shed that he estimates was built in the 1920's he plans on erecting a barn/lodge that will look historic. Other ideas that he envisions is a couple of old cabins or houses out by one of the ponds or wetlands. He would also like to have a full size Steam Engine and

Tender on the site for people to connect to the history of the railroad that crosses his property still today.

Plans are to have walkways around the property that people can use to see the different exhibits. The barn or lodge will be used for different events such as weddings and group gatherings.

Because Brennan has not made application for a "Conditional Use Permit" the Planning Commission could not comment on the project. Lyle Reynolds thanked him for the presentation and wished him well in his endeavors. No action taken.

6. *Old Business: Continued discussion on potential changes to density standards.*

The members of the Commission in an effort to find a compromise between two per forty and four per forty discussed different options. Lyle Reynolds polled the Commission on their feelings on what the changes should be. They are as follows:

Dave Henderson: Two per forty – contiguous

Craig Bjorklund: Four per forty – non-contiguous. *(Remarked if it is contiguous four per forty is not needed)*

Cindy Anderson: Four per forty – non-contiguous.

Lyle Reynolds: Four per forty – non-contiguous.

Dan Woodfill: Four per forty – non-contiguous.

Jake Carpenter: Four per forty – non-contiguous. *(Remarked bigger lot sizes to five acres)*

It seems that the consciences is to go to four per forty but the transfer of development rights was another matter. Jim Braun cautioned the Commission that he has gotten word from the Board Members that they did not want to see large clusters of home especially on agricultural land. They feel that this change was being put in place to help the large landowners develop their treed areas instead of clear cutting the trees in order to reduce their tax burden.

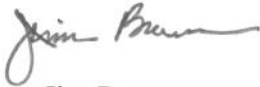
A few of the member mentioned eight per forty which Jim Braun remarked that they would never sell that option to the Board of Supervisors. On a 160 acre tract a cluster of 32 houses could be placed where for quarter-quarter sections meet.

Other points that need to be considered are will Isanti County allow the larger size (5 acre) parcels in Athens Township. Another is in order to transfer development right the parcels have to be in common ownership. Transfer of development rights can only be transferred to fallow parcels for how many years fallow?

After some more give and take discussion, Carolyn said that she will start making the changes to the ordinance/code with some type of compromise and bring it back to the Commission in the next two months. No action taken.

8. *Miscellaneous:* None
9. *Adjournment:* Because there was no further business a motion was made by Dave Henderson to adjourn the meeting seconded by Cindy Anderson, Motion carried unanimously at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Jim Braun
Recorder Pro-Tem

Enclosures:

Note to the Commission on size of detached structures – Lyle Reynolds

Business Plan: Circle B Ranch Retreat/Historic Farm – Brennan Cox

Ordinance Amending Town Code – Accessory Buildings – Carolyn Braun