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**Minutes from the special joint meeting of Grant County Planning Commission
November 8th, 2021**

Planning Commission members present: Mark Leddy, John Seffrood, Mike Mach, Tom Pillatzki, and Jim Berg.

Alternate(s) present: Don Weber, Jeff McCulloch

Planning Commission board members absent: Nancy Johnson and Richard Hansen

Others present: Scott Robertson, Todd Kays (First District), and Steve Berkner (Grant County Planning Commission officer.)

Meeting Date: Monday, November 8th, 2021

Meeting Time: 4 P.M. In-person in basement of the Courthouse.

1. Chairperson Leddy calls the Planning Commission meeting to order at 4:52 with a quorum of 7 board members.
2. Leddy asks the board and staff present if they would like to add anything to the agenda where no one spoke up.
3. Leddy asks if there are any citizens who wish to be added to the agenda to be heard for up to 10 minutes where nobody responded.
4. Leddy asks for a motion to accept the agenda as presented. With no changes or amendments offered Pillatzki makes a first to accept the agenda with Berg making a second. Motion passes unanimously 7-0.
5. Leddy calls for a motion to accept the Planning Commission minutes from October 18th. Motion made by Mach with a second by Berg. Motion passes unanimously 7-0.
6. Leddy asks for a motion to consider recommending the approval of the Liebe's First Addition plat. Mach makes a first followed by Pillatzki who seconds the motion.

Planning Commission administrator Berkner gave a report on the 12-lot plat; Lots 1, 1A, 2, 2A, 3, 3A, 4, 4A, 5, 5A, 6, and 7, where the five "A" lots accounted for a shared "east / west" roadway that had a 24' Right-of-Way. The Right-of-Way accounted for an existing private road that was built by and maintained by a business located just east of the planned sub-division as a "haul road."

Berkner explained with the help of Scott Robinson from Banner Associates, who drew up the sub-division plat, that each of the "A" lots were to be sold with the corresponding numerical lot where that lot owner would be responsible for maintenance and snow removal if an agreement between all the eventual lot owners could not work out a plan.

According to Robinson an easement Right-of-Way (R-o-A) was also created for what is know as Riech's Road, an already existing private road that provides secondary access to Reich's Third Addition and Whetstone Meadows Estates Subdivision via the private haul road already built.

Kays said that according to the County's Sub Division Ordinance all of the private roads that are already built and in use in the sub-division needed to have a 66 foot R-o-W and a minimum 24' roadway (Section 604.1 a) and that the Liebe plat request should be tabled until those specifications could be met

Additional key discussion points made also requested that the sub-division plat being considered needed to address things like; road maintenance agreements, road access easements, and possibly a Home Owners Association agreement. Robertson said that it was his understanding that the developer was going to address all of those type of issues using easements.

Discussion then revolved around whether the Liebe sub-division plat should be denied or tabled where Kays said either would work as the Planning Commission was only "recommending or not recommending" that the actual sub-division approval was up to the County Commissioners where if it was voted down by the Planning Commission than it would be up to the developer to convince the County Commissioners that the Planning Commission's decision was wrong.

Kays said that since the plat in question doesn't meet certain standards of the county's definition of what an acceptable sub-division plat is it might be better to table that decision to the next Planning and Zoning meeting where the issues brought up could be addressed by the developer.

Pillatzki mad a motion to table the plat approval request until December 13th where Leddy made a second. The roll call vote was unanimous 7-0.

7. Moving on the next item on the agenda Leddy asked for a motion to recommend for approval the Adler's Second Addition plat with Berg making a first and McCulloch making a second.

Berkner gave an overview of the proposed Adler plat where there was little discussion on possible problems with the plat where Leddy called for the vote which passed unanimously 7-0.

8. Leddy then called for a motion to recommend to approve the Hardstand Addition which received a first by Pillatzki and a second by Berg.

Berkner gave an overview of the plat where little discussion was held concerning the new plat.

Leddy called for the vote which passed unanimously 7-0.

9. With no more official business needing action Kays continued an ongoing discussion about updating the Land Use portion of the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Kays said that First District was reviewing the housing density maps that were discussed the month prior and that updates were presently being made to make those maps more accurate by the 13th of December meeting.

Berkner suggested that since Scott Robertson of Banner Associates was present at the meeting that now might be a good time to get his professional opinion as a surveyor on identifying the short comings of platting small 2 acre lots which is the minimum allowed in the current county zoning ordinance.

Robertson said that 2 acres works if you only want to build a house and maybe a small accessory building, but it also depends on things like the natural lay of the land with ravines or where existing tree groves and driveways are.

Kays responded that these areas are usually viewed as a "no build areas" and are usually found on existing farmsteads that are being platted off for various reasons usually to meet a 2-acre minimum standard and eventually if the features just mentioned by Robertson aren't taken into account they usually need a variance so the question is why did we approve that type of plat to begin with.

Kays added that even if the county goes to 3 acres lots as the smallest to be considered a buildable lot, those size lots still don't work well for things like adding shelterbelts or multiple accessory buildings.

Robertson brought up the point that the mortgage banks are wanting lot sizes that just surrounds the house and one accessory building.

Kays responded that meeting bank mortgage requirements should not be the sole reason for allowing smaller lots. Kays said the bank can always request a mortgage survey which accomplishes the same thing.

Seffrood thought that rural residential lots should by definition be requiring bigger lots where there is room for trees and a big shed or the buyer should be reconsidering living where they can have a smaller lot like in town.

Kays reminded the Planning Commission that he was working on an “al-a-carte” zoning ordinance that would allow certain types of high or low density residential housing in different parts of the county depending on how rural or urban the surroundings were.

Seffrood and Leddy both agreed that part of the problem is a person used to living in town thinks that even a 2-acre lot is larger than they will ever need. Berkner added that just making the minimum lot width 300 feet, instead of 200 feet, would make a big difference.

Leddy said that the important thing in the platting of a subdivision, or even platting simple lots, is to make sure that people are doing them right.

Leddy added that conceptually small lots work if you have planned for utilities, roads, trees and even for a possible future accessory building but allowing someone to just create a lot so they can have a lot to build on isn't doing them or the county any favors.

Leddy said he thought especially when allowing smaller lots the county needed to just make sure we are recognizing when we need things like frontage roads and wider widths.

Kays said its not hard to plan for these type of smaller lots, especially if they are closer to towns, but you need to be able to maximize the features of the land with the needs of an average homebuilder. Kays added that it can be done but it needs careful consideration when approving a buildable plat to be able to recognize what is and isn't going to work for future development.

Leddy agreed that he thought allowing smaller lots closer to towns, like in a properly planned sub-division, was probably the answer for people looking to build on smaller lots and that 15-foot side lot setbacks and 25 or 50-foot front lot setbacks, like you see in towns, would probably work with an actual frontage road. But it all takes careful planning.

Kays said that the idea behind density zoning where there are a lot of open spaces you might allow only one house per quarter, unless it's a family member wanting to build near their family homestead, where in closer to towns or major highway corridors you might allow two or three times that or allow a multi-unit sub-division that follows a certain standard.

Mach said that he didn't like the idea of much smaller lots being allowed anywhere in the county, even in well planned sub-divisions, as it seems right away that any accessory building is going to only be allowed in the back yard and access to that building is going to be out of the way and then they are asking for a variance.

Seffrood concurred saying that earlier we had two variance request to build closer to lot lines because both of them where the first accessory building to be built and because of the elevation changes from the front to the back of the lots there really wasn't anywhere else to build.

Kays finished off the discussion by saying that once the updated Comprehensive Plan identifies what type of guidelines need to be considered as proper land use in the county, like recommending high and low density zoning, then we can get to work on tweaking the ordinance to allow for these new ideas.

10. With no more discussion Leddy called for a motion to adjourn, Seffrood made the motion to adjourn, McColloch made the second. Vote carries unanimously 7-0.

Meeting ends at 6:45.

Steve Berkner
Planning and Zoning Administrator
Grant County