

**Town of Duluth  
Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
May 23, 2019**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Chair, Liz Strohmayr.

Present: Liz Strohmayr, Wayne Dahlberg, Jerry Hauge, Larry Zanko, Dave Edblom, Pam West and Angela Wilson.

Absent: No one.

Also present: Sue Lawson, Planning Director and Mike Kahl, Town Board liaison to the Planning Commission.

The agenda was approved as presented.

The April minutes were approved with one spelling correction.

Community members had been invited, through postings and the Town newsletter, to provide input on the recommended Core Community Values as developed by the Comprehensive Land Use Plan Steering Group. There were six people present in the audience. Everyone introduced themselves.

Sue presented the history of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) update.

A CLUP is used as a guideline for writing the Zoning Ordinance. The CLUP provides information on goals and policies and the vision we are trying to create for the Town. This information is then used to develop the Zoning Ordinance which becomes the official legal document for land uses in the Town. The CLUP is also referred to for guidance for making decisions for variance or conditional use requests. The land use planning process essentially involves the following questions: Where have we been? Where are we now? What issues do we have? and Where do we want to go?

At the start of the process, comments were elicited from the community by asking them to fill in the blanks in this sentence: "Above all else, I value \_\_\_\_ in the Township because \_\_\_\_." The comments that were received fell into broad themes, roughly 45% about community, 20% about the natural environment and 35% pertaining to ruralness. Most of the comments, 78%, came from inland and 17% came from the shore area.

Community members were invited to the meeting tonight to comment on the recommended Core Community Values. If someone believes something should be changed, it is helpful to know why and how it should be changed.

Branden, from the audience, asked what percent of the population of the Township is inland vs along the shore.

Inland is considered the area of the Township above the expressway. No one knew of any population data that showed that break out.

Cindy, from the audience, said that when she read through the comments, it seemed to her that no one wanted things to change much. Why is there a push towards commercialization?

Sue said that there is no particular push for commercial activity. There is mention of commercial in the values: “We value access to local goods and services within the Township.” The commercial areas in the Town are Tom’s Logging Camp, the McQuade Harbor area, the Homestead Road and Hwy 61 area and the Lismore Road/McQuade Road intersection area. The upcoming report will look at what commercial development has occurred since 2002.

Cindy said that she felt there were people who wanted to establish a business in the Town because they can buy a small property and it’s more affordable in the Township. Incomers like this would not value the community the same way residents do. They are only considering cost. She said that we need to follow through on businesses that have been allowed in the Town and make sure their sites are maintained as they are supposed to be. For instance, when the Sinclair station went in, they were told they had to screen it, but there has been no screening.

Branden asked how some of the industrial and commercial zones were determined for the current zoning map.

Peggy Dahlberg said that it was because there were already businesses in those areas.

Sue said that the first CLUP was written in 1976. The assumption made then was that the direction of development would be from the shore to inland. But the direction has since proven to be from Duluth eastward along the shore.

Branden asked how to shape industrial zones for the future. There is a lot of undeveloped area in the Township. It does not seem that LIUs in these areas would be a good fit. To date, the Town has valued not putting development in these areas. How do you see some of those things changing?

Sue said that it was impossible to answer that question. She said that it is all a process. The CLUP planning looks at very general areas and the whole picture going forward. The isolated LIU areas were established over 40 years ago. It is important that the community remain engaged as the process moves forward.

Wayne said that he was born and raised here. Every area that is presently commercial – the restaurants, McQuade Road on the shore – has been there since the 40s and 50s. Homestead Road at Hwy 61 was a node for the railroad going way back. There was a church and a store there. Toms Logging Camp was there when he was a kid. The Bomarc missile base, which is now zoned for light industrial use, was established in the late 50s. There was a bar there called the Missile Inn. The old County garage was at the McQuade and Lismore intersection at least since the 50s. That area has increased some because there was already a commercial node there. Farther north up Homestead, there was the Clover Valley High School. There used to be a restaurant at the Talmadge River, the Forest Inn. A lot of current commercial or industrial is what we started with. Just like the small lots in areas along the shore. We are doing our best to blend what we have with property rights and present day population desires and needs.

He said that the Township has, if anything, has been cleaned up in some areas. For instance, where Dryco is now, there used to be a tank farm which was an eyesore and is now cleaned up. The Clover Valley High School has also been taken down and the property has been rezoned to residential.

Sue said that there were many LIUs or LIU proposals that did not work out at The Clover Valley High School site before it was suggested for rezoning.

Sue said that the Commission will review the recommended Core Community Values and then forward them to the Board with changes, if any. Once the Board has reviewed them and made changes (if any) and agreed, the values will be approved for updating the CLUP. Considerable thought and effort on the part of a lot of people have gone into their development.

Liz suggested that the Commission look at each section of the values, take a few minutes to read through them and then decide by section.

The Commission agreed that the values were good and should be used for the CLUP planning process.

Wayne said that he was the Zoning Administrator for the Town for 10 or 12 years prior to Sue. There was some doubt on the part of the County that the Town would persist with planning and zoning. They thought the Town would give up. It's important to retain local control and have a voice, even if it's not always easy. We still must be at least as restrictive as the County in our zoning. But sometimes decisions can be made at the County level that don't consider our needs. Item 3 under Community Life, "We value the Township form of government whereby we have local control in governing ourselves and community members directly vote on what is important to invest in for the wellbeing of our community." is important. Hopefully the Town will always have people willing to step forward and fill roles in local government.

Larry said that he was impressed by the values and comments.

Gary, from the audience, asked how the values will be used as we go forward. For instance, planning for climate change, pollution, etc.

Larry said that the Town's Stormwater Plan reflects some of that. We are seeing much more variable weather and larger weather events. He feels that it is important to recognize climate change as we plan.

Wayne said that stormwater control for construction, etc. has just come into being since the late 90s. In our Township, we work to enforce construction runoff rules.

Sue said that townships have limited statutory authority. But the Town has, in some instances, the ability to advocate for things from a higher level and can work with others. The Town is a part of the North Shore Management Board, so we have advocacy for how we think the shore should be managed. This is an important part of how we want our community to be and our Core Community Values will help to guide the Town in these interactions.

Branden said that he has seen a lot of good models that the Township could follow for disaster preparedness for emergencies and major weather events.

Sue said that the Town has an emergency management team. There are certain things we can be prepared for. We also have great medical first responders and firefighters.

Wayne said that when the addition to the Town Hall was planned, it was decided to set up the community room such that it could be used as a center for emergency communications.

Dave said that the North Shore Community School has also integrated emergency services into their facilities. They have back up power that may not be able to run the whole plant, but can keep key things going.

Branden said that, on a broader topic, the community values privacy. With more people coming into the community, there is an increased chance for loss of privacy.

Larry made a motion that the Core Community Value Statements be approved for use in the development of the CLUP. Liz seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

### **Directors Report**

The CSG will meet on the third Thursday of June and will go over the report that she, Clint Little and Beth have been preparing, on what has happened in the Town since 2002.

Sue said that there have been fewer LUP applications so far this year compared to previous years. There will probably be a variance hearing in June.

### **Old Business**

None.

### **Concerns from the Audience**

Gary said that he appreciates the time and effort the Board and Commission put in. It is very valuable.

Branden said that he appreciated the explanation of the process. It is nice to know these steps are in place.

The meeting adjourned at 7:39.