

MINUTES

The Iron County Comprehensive Planning/Land and Zoning Committee met at the Courthouse on Thursday, January 30, 2014. The meeting was called to order at 5:30pm by Chairman Kichak. Proper publication of the meeting was established.

Committee Members Present: Jim Kichak, Jim Lambert, Gerald Luke, John Smith, & George Nasi. Also present: Zoning Admin Tom Bergman and County Board Chairman Joe Pinardi.

Motion by Lambert/Nasi to approve the minutes from 1/21/14; carried 5-0.

Kichak read the public comment guidelines for the meeting

Conditional Use Hearing – Gogebic Taconite – Allow bulk sampling in an F-1 (Forestry) zoned District, sites being located in part of the NE ¼ of the SW ¼ and part of the SW ¼ of the NE ¼, Sec. 33, T45N, R1W, Town of Anderson, (site address is Moore Park Road).

Kichak asked Gogebic Taconite to comment on their proposed project. Tim Myers explained that the company is looking to remove rock to determine the hardness of the rock. The purpose of this is to determine the type of mill they will need to process the rock. Highway trucks will be used to transport the rock to a lab in Western Minnesota. They will be picking up rock that has already been disturbed at two sites and at a third site they will use a hydraulic hammer to break up the rock. The bulk sampling process is thought to take about 6 weeks. Luke clarified the removal process, and Lambert clarified that the area will be regraded and revegetated due to the trench created by the bulk sampling.

Open Public Comment:

Steve Schurtter-Montreal, retired in Montreal, likes it and loves it up here, would like to see prosperity coming in but done correctly, it would be nice to have jobs, we need this to explore what is there and if it is worth our time

Richard Theide-Oma, the ordinance states that the conditional use will be approved if the DNR has already approved, read sections 9.7.14(D)(1) and 9.7.14(E) of the county ordinance, this makes the ordinance presuppose that the DNR has issued a permit but the DNR no longer issues a permit. The ordinance is in the process of being redrafted. If the conditional use is approved before the ordinance is redrafted some landowners that feel strongly will likely litigate, further costing the county money and time, recommends redrafting the ordinance and rescheduling this hearing for a later date.

Bobbi Rongstad-Gurney, read a letter from Steve Fiene a landowner on Moore Park Rd who could not make it to the meeting.

Aileen Potter-Montreal, we have been working on this process since June 17th, the last letter from the DNR was December 20th, asking for more information and the stormwater permit, are we putting the cart before the horse?, should we wait for the DNR to approve before we approve the conditional use? Why don't they do their homework first and get the process completed in the correct order.

Maureen Matusewic-Hurley, if this process was merely picking up rocks and moving them then go ahead no big deal but it isn't, we are up against bullies, what is the big hurry, is it the high capacity well issue? They plan to put a pipeline in from Ironwood through our rivers? When Gogebic Taconite is asked questions they give weird answers. For example it is still wet on the site but GTac will avoid giving an answer. Protect our water. We have trees, water, and minerals. We are rich, they will take our water with our minerals. What is everyone talking about being poor, we are a rich county.

John Schneider-Rhineland, WI, please go out and see for yourself where they want to transfer the rock, it is at the top of a hill and the slope of the hill runs right into the Tyler Forks, It may not make an impact now but in the spring everything they disturbed will be runoff with the snowmelt, just take the time to go out to the site and look at that, look at the project

Russell Buccanero-Iron Belt, cabin on Moore Park Road, when the first word of the idea of the mine came about it sounded good for the community, but we won't put up with or need someone running us over, Gogebic Taconite's plan is false, this is not just a gopher hole, it will be one of the largest mines in the world, it will bring good times for some but will only benefit a few, our life will change as we know it, with the first word of the idea it sounded good, went to talk with Gogebic Taconite, they urged me to sell property to them, Gogebic Taconite is not good at PR, some companies build schools, and new roads, GTac has offered nothing, they are stepping on us, who is doing the testing in this site and how do we know it isn't a biased connection, we need a lot more information, impact committee should do their job and talk to the people that are really impacted, it seems to be one side against the other, a few with terrible actions have given the opposition a bad name, let's get into the science of it, too much politics taking affect, we definitely need jobs but not sure if this is the best way to get them.

Leslie Kolesar-Saxon, Chris Jaekels states that the ordinance will support the decision to approve the conditional use as it is today. I can't believe citizens would bring frivolous law suits against an already cash strapped county, let's keep the process moving and get beyond it.

Close Public Comment

Discussion of Committee: Kichak states that the committee takes this project seriously, if it wasn't taken seriously the committee members would not trudge through the snow to visit the mine site and take so much time to deal with this project.

Bergman read the proposed conditions to the committee.

Luke asked how many permits will be required of them through the bulk sampling process? Bergman explained they would need one stormwater permit, Luke then asked if GTac was planning to blast, Tim Myers responded that it is merely a backup plan. The only reason they would need for blasting would be if they did not already have enough rock samples to do their testing. Luke asked if the conditional use is consistent with the Town of Anderson and Iron County's comprehensive plan, Bergman stated that yes it does meet the comprehensive plan.

Lambert stated that the stormwater permit from the DNR is necessary to start the bulk sampling process, he then asked Gtac what they believe the timeline to be on the stormwater permit. Tim Myers stated that they have done a lot of back and forth commenting with the DNR, the last comments that he believes address everything they are looking for have yet to be returned. Pinardi stated that if the sampling process will take 6 weeks, even if they get the stormwater permit now, brings them to mid-March. Which means the shape of the roads will be questionable.

Luke asked what the Army Corp of Engineers requires for the bulk sampling process. Tim Myers of GTac explained that the Army Corp deals with wetlands and streams and GTac has avoided areas where they will have impacts on wetlands and streams. Luke also asked if the Town of Anderson approved the conditional use with the conditions presented previously, Bergman answered yes.

Motion to approve by Nasi/Luke with the proposed conditions and pending the stormwater permit from the DNR; carried 5-0.

Conditional Use Hearing – Anita Ponik – Allow the operation of a tourist rooming house in an R-1 (Residential) zoned District, part of GV Lot 3, Sec. 25, T43N, R4E, Town of Mercer, (site address is 2379W County Road J). Town board approval was received. Motion by Lambert/Smith to approve; carried 5-0.

Administrators Report – Bergman reminded the committee of the next regular meeting date which will be February 18, 2014 at 3:00pm. At that time there will be the hearing for the small text change to the bulk sampling ordinance.

Public Comment – a member of the public thanked the zoning committee for having open meetings and listening to people's comments.

Motion by Lambert/Luke to Adjourn.