

Planning Commission Meeting Feb 3rd, 2011 7:00 pm

Attendees: Ray Kiewit, Susan Keachie, Joni Brooks and Fred Schlicting

Members of the Public: Bill Sloan – Bell Town Chairman, Dennis Edwards, Mike Wright, Greg Weiss and Mike Coughlin.

Minutes from the meeting of 1-6-2011 were read. Bill made a correction to the minutes of 1/6/2011. The reference that Bill made to the “redefinition” of Economic development should be credited to Mike Wright instead of himself. Joni made a motion to approve with corrections and Fred 2nd. All were in favor of approval.

Updates: Ray had no updates.

This meeting continued discussion of economic issues that began last month.

Ray introduced Mike Wright to inform the group of information that had been discussed during conversations with Bruce Lindgren and others at a weekly meeting in Herbster. These discussions began with Mike’s interest in purchasing Bruce’s building and talking about potential business possibilities for the building. Those discussions progressed into broader topics of the economics of the area and ways to improve the business climate.

The big question was why isn’t business coming here? The answer: that there are not enough people living here to sustain business.

Next question: how to get more people here? The answer is to somehow make it possible for people that may want to live here to actually make it happen. Thought: begin with the people who already vacation here or own property here that don’t want to go home – but have to for employment.

Goal: 20 households from 20 metro areas by the year 2020

Idea #1: bring people to the area, put them up, and make them subject to a 3 hour presentation showing attractions and opportunities. Can we get people here and if so how?

Idea #2: Fiber optic is the net – new people are the fish. Bring people here by promoting available fiber optics.

Greg Weiss introduced himself. He is employed by Northland College in the area of Student Development. The issues he sees there are innovation and collaboration. He sees our aging population as an issue for future expansion of services.

Greg is proposing a new kayak tour and rental business in Cornucopia. He has had mostly positive feedback so far. His options for structuring the business are to maintain a mobile presence with existing local business/businesses promoting and booking tours or a fixed site. He is currently looking at a fixed site of either the Sea Hag or the old South Shore Motel. Members of the public and the Commission had varying opinions as to the options for the location. Concerns have been expressed about adding traffic to the beach area, crossing Hwy 13 with boats or paddle boards, using the beach for individual kayak launching, stress on the public restrooms.

The Commission decided that it would like to research information from other Towns and beaches that have kayak traffic on them and try to learn some of the pitfalls and protections that might be put in place. Discussion with Greg re: insurance and permits. He would like to expand the business eventually to include classes in kayak building and paddle making, perhaps working towards a model like the North House Folk School that is operating successfully in Grand Marais. Possible Land Use issues were discussed.

When asked what support the Commission/Community could lend to Greg's process of getting started, he expressed that his most urgent issue is determining where he could gain access to the Lake. The Commission will review collected information and make a possible recommendation to the Town Board at next month's meeting.

Back to the discussion of economics:

Susan suggested that perhaps a good issue for the South Shore School project based learning curriculum would be to research and identify corporations or industries that make use of work-at-home technology

Another suggestion was to survey young people (ages ____ to ____) to ask what would bring them back to the area or allow them to stay and make a living.

Ray read a contribution from Commissioner Max Taubert who was unable to attend this meeting. Some discussion of his comments followed
That memo is attached to these minutes.

Fred made a motion that the meeting be adjourned. Ray 2nd the motion and all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

The next meeting will be on Thursday March 3rd at 7 pm at the Community Center.