

**Princeton Township  
Mille Lacs County, Minnesota**

**Planning Commission Meeting**

**Monday, June 7, 2021**

**Minutes**

**Public Hearing**

On June 7, 6:15 p.m., Chair Cyndi MacDonald opened the public hearing.

**Commission members present:** Cyndi MacDonald, David Persing, Steve Pflieger, Cheryl Schimming, Kathy Stoeckel, Carol Whitcomb (via GoToMeeting)

**Staff attending:** Zoning Administrator Scott Richards, Clerk-Treasurer Doug Dahl, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Andrea Gerrard

**Public in-person attendees:** Erik Walker, Carl Sanford

**Eric and Rachel Walker Variance Request**

Erik and Rachel Walker have applied for a side-yard setback variance to allow construction of a pole building at 10756 40<sup>th</sup> Street. The property is within Section 18, PID 16-018-0600. The applicants propose a setback of 27 feet from the east property line. The property is zoned AC Agriculture Conservation requiring a 35-foot setback from side property lines.

The Walkers maintain that the variance is necessary to avoid constructing the pole building too close to an existing fire pit, and to preserve trees that would have to be removed to fit the building within the 35-foot setback.

The Walkers' next-door neighbor, Carl Sanford, testified in favor of the variance.

Chair MacDonald closed the public hearing at 6:25 p.m.

**Regular Meeting**

At 6:30 p.m., Chair Cyndi MacDonald called the regular monthly meeting to order.

**Commission members present:** Cyndi MacDonald, David Persing, Steve Pflieger, Cheryl Schimming, Kathy Stoeckel, Carol Whitcomb (via GoToMeeting)

**Staff attending:** Zoning Administrator Scott Richards, Clerk-Treasurer Doug Dahl, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer Andrea Gerrard

**Public in-person attendees:** Erik Walker, Carl Sanford, Scott Moller

All participants recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Approve Agenda**

Cyndi MacDonald moved to add Planning Commission re-organization to the agenda. Seconded by Steve Pflieger. Motion carried.

### **Post-Election Planning Commission Re-Organization**

Cyndi MacDonald moved to appoint Dave Persing as Planning Commission chair. Seconded by Cheryl Schimming. Motion carried.

Cheryl Schimming moved to appoint Cyndi MacDonald as Planning Commission vice-chair. Seconded by Steve Pflieger. Motion carried.

### **Open Forum**

No activity in Open Forum

### **Approve Minutes of May 3, 2021 Meeting**

Steve Pflieger moved to approve the minutes of the May 3 meeting. Seconded by Dave Persing. Ms. MacDonald pointed out a minor typographical error. Motion carried with the correction.

### **Eric and Rachel Walker Side-Yard Variance Request**

Mr. Richards reviewed the details of the application. In response to commissioners' questions about the possibility of removing obstructive trees to maintain the 35-foot setback Mr. Richards noted that mature trees are generally considered reasonable practical difficulties when considering variances.

Mr. Persing moved to approve the variance at 27 feet. Seconded by Ms. Schimming. Ms. MacDonald called the roll:

Mr. Persing—Yes; Mr. Pflieger—Yes; Ms. Schimming—Yes; Ms. Whitcomb—Yes; Ms. MacDonald—Yes; Ms. Stoeckel—No. Motion carried 5-1.

### **Section 27 & 34 Land Use and Zoning Study**

Mr. Richards reviewed the history of the request by Scott Moller to re-zone Township Section 27 from Agricultural Conservation to Rural Residential. The re-zoning will be necessary to allow Mr. Moller to pursue approval of a subdivision sketch plan he submitted in 2020. Mr. Moller's sketch plan application prompted the Planning Commission to study the history of developments in the vicinity, some of which were below the rural residential standard of 1.25 acres per lot. Mr. Moller agreed to postpone his application until the study was completed.

Mr. Moller has now come back to the commission to pursue his request for re-zoning of Section 27. Commissioners remain generally opposed to the re-zoning, as they were when the plan was first submitted. However, they agreed that the Town Board should consider providing direction to Mr. Moller on the question.

Mr. Pflieger moved to send Mr. Moller's request to the Town Board asking the Board to allow Mr. Moller to present a preliminary plat application, and request changes to the Comprehensive Plan and zoning that would enable him to proceed with his development plan. Seconded by Ms. Schimming. Ms. MacDonald called the roll:

Mr. Persing—Yes; Mr. Pflieger—Yes; Ms. Schimming—Yes; Ms. Whitcomb—Yes; Ms. MacDonald—Yes; Ms. Stoeckel—No. Motion carried 5-1.

**Zoning District Setback Standards and Accessory Building Sizes**

The township has received several applications for setback variances in recent months. Those applications have prompted members of the Planning Commission and Town Board to question if the township’s uniform side-yard setback of 35 feet should be amended. Mr. Richards offered the ordinance from Greenbush Township as an example of setback requirements that vary, depending on the zoning classification.

The setback question has also raised the issue of building sizes. Mr. Richards cited examples of building-size regulations in other jurisdictions. He suggested considering size regulations along with any reconsideration of setback requirements. The Greenbush ordinance is useful because it is recent, and addresses many of the same concerns now being raised by applicants in Princeton Township.

Mr. Richards will continue researching both questions toward the goal of helping the township determine if amendments to setback and building-size regulations are needed.

**Zoning Ordinance Items: Electronic Signs**

No action was taken by the Commission. Mr. Richards will continue researching the issue.

**Adjournment**

Steve Pflieger moved to adjourn. Seconded by Kathy Stockel. Motion carried.  
Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Doug Dahl  
Clerk/Treasurer