

**PRINCETON TOWNSHIP  
MILLE LACS COUNTY, MN**

**PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**November 3, 2025**

**Princeton Township Town Hall**

**Present:** Dave Hagstrom, Kathy Stoeckel, Dave Persing, Sara Rutten, Cheryl Schimming, and Steve Pfleghaar

**Public Hearings – (6:00)**

- **Section 22 - Gary Johnson Variance for a Buildable Lot at 40<sup>th</sup> Street / 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue - PID 16-022-0102**
  - Scott Richards: He went over the variance request with the Planning Commission. He explained the reason for the variance that is being presented today. Mr. Johnson came to the Town Board after discovering a house was built on the same 40-acre plat that he is on. When he purchased his property in 2003, he had his intent to build and was told he would be the last house built on the 40 acres. After finishing the investigation at the Township, it was found that in the file was a statement that this would be the last buildable lot after the land split of the 40-acre parcel. The Commissioners are recommended in favor of the variance and there are some conditions.
    - Owner of the property Gary Johnson had commented: When he bought this property, he intended to build on it when he retired. He does care for the property throughout the year and hopes to build it by next year. The previous owner believes he passed away in the last year or two and that is where the mix up possibly happened.
    - Rick: (stated he lives across the street from property): He does not want the Township to grant the variance because Mr. Johnson had 21 years to build and did not do so in that time.
    - John Brown: He has the same situation with his property. He would like to know if the Township is going to be doing more of these situations. For example, if someone buys land and decides they want to change their mind and build and then it would change who gets to build in the area. Could he decide next week he wants to sell off parcels and make them buildable?
- **Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map Amendment from AC Agriculture Conservation to R-1 Residential in Section 26, South of 30<sup>th</sup> Street/County Road 1 at 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The properties included are PID 16-026-1000, PID 16-026-1001, PID 16-026-1100**
  - Scott Richards: He went over the requested zoning amendment, which was given to Commissioners. The subject property is an area that is already developed with a similar sized residential property. A number of those properties were approved years ago, with one to two acre lots.

Changes in zoning to R1 concentrates this type of development in this particular area while preserving the Ag land further to the north of the Township. The Township should also look towards updating their Comprehensive Plan for further development in the Township.

- **Public Comment:** The Commission was also provided with a petition to not allow the new development. Two letters were also read to the Supervisors by the Chair.
  - Summary: Many of the residents who spoke at the meeting shared the same concerns about the traffic that would be on the current roads. Also, many concerns with County Road 1 and how that road won't be able to handle the traffic. Residents also shared the same concern of water in the area and if the wells will be able to sustain more houses in the area. They do not want this large development. They want it to stay agriculture and preserve farming in the community. Residents who have homes near the cul-de-sac said that they were enticed to buy their home without it being a thru-road. Residents also shared that they do not feel they were given notification of a change in zoning and were wondering how they're supposed to know what's going on in their community. (They were informed that the Township is only required to do up to 300 feet for notification of property rezoning from neighboring)
- Nathan Cook: Property Owner
  - He wanted to make some clarifications to the community about his intentions with the property and understanding of some of the reasons why the previous property was built the way it was. He explained that the cul-de-sac was designed to be pushed through. Also, he has been approached by the City of Princeton for annexation recently. He also wanted to clear up that just because they put that there are going to be 52 lots that does not mean there will be 52 lots. The majority of the time they do not get the maximum they are looking for. Things change from the beginning to the final mapping of all the properties.
- Christy Bernard: Works with Mr. Cook
  - She emphasized that the Township does not want this property annexed to the City of Princeton. She said that if residents are worried about 50 houses, an annexation would be 100 houses. She went over that by the time the final plat comes out, there will be several changes that must be completed before building starts. She also said that the majority of this land is sand, which is not friendly for agriculture production.

Commissioner Pfleghaar motions to close the public meeting Commissioner Schimming  
Seconded

Motion passed unanimously at 6:55 pm

### **Regular Meeting (6:55 pm)**

- Call Regular Meeting to Order
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Approve Agenda
- Commissioner Stoeckel makes motion to approve agenda Commissioner Pfleghaar second motion
  - Motion passed unanimously
- Open Forum
  - No one spoke
- Approve Minutes of Meeting – October 6, 2025
  - Commissioner Hagstrom motions to approve the minutes, Commissioner Stoeckel seconds
    - Commissioner Schimming abstained from the vote due to not being at the meeting
    - Motion pass with majority
- Consider a Variance for Gary Johnson in Section 22 for a Buildable Lot at 40<sup>th</sup> Street / 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue - PID 16-022-0102
  - Commissioner Persing would like to know what the Township will be doing in the future to ensure this does not happen again with residents' property. Mr. Richards explained that a faxed note stapled on the back of papers in the Township file were evidenced.
  - Commissioner Pfleghaar wanted to get some clarification on if someone buys property, how long do they really have to build on it?
  - Commissioner Pfleghaar made the motion to grant Mr. Johnson the variance Commissioner, Commissioner Hagstrom seconds the motion.
  - Commissioner Persing made it clear that the Township did have a fax that was sent to the title company stating this would be a buildable property in 2004.
  - Motion passed unanimously

- Consider a Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map and Zoning Map Amendment from AC Agriculture Conservation to R-1 Residential in Section 26, South of 30<sup>th</sup> Street/County Road 1 at 70<sup>th</sup> Avenue
  - Commissioner Stoeckel wanted to make it clear that the buyer was not guaranteed a rezoning when the property was bought and that he was aware that it was zoned agricultural.
  - Commissioner Rutten would like to know about the hunting rights in the area and if the citizens would lose their hunting rights of that area. She is asking if the Township were to approve this, what will be the future for the Township? Will every farmer be allowed to have a rezone and bring forward housing developments? How do we want the Township to look in the future? She would like to see some research done on the topic before they move forward.
  - Commissioner Rutten makes motion table the request, Commissioner Stoeckel seconds the motion. Public Hearing to continue in December.
  - Commissioner Stoeckel would like to see more residents involved in things that are going on in the Township, and she appreciates everyone who showed up to the meeting. Once the community gives their input, good decisions can be made on their behalf. She would also like to see more residents informed about any development plans in the Township. She does not believe enough people were informed of this development.
  - Mr Richards: He explained that notices to the community went out beyond what the State requires. He recommends that the Township look at getting a Comprehensive Plan to be clearer in what the goals for the Township are going to be to ensure the residents are involved.
  - Motion passed unanimously

### **Adjourn at 7:30 pm**

Commissioner Pfleghaar makes the motion to adjourn; Commissioner Hagstrom seconds Motion passed unanimously