

**TOWN OF GIBRALTAR  
PLAN COMMISSION  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2020  
GIBRALTAR TOWN CENTER  
7:00 P.M.**

**Call to Order**

Linda Merline called the meeting to order at 7:07 pm. This meeting was conducted via Zoom and phone conference line due to COVID19 and the state of Wisconsin's "Safer at Home" order.

**Roll Call / Quorum:** A quorum was present.

Members present: Linda Merline, Tom Blackwood, Brian Hackbarth, Don Freix

Members absent: Len Adent

Also present: Karl Erickson (petitioner)

**Proper Notice / Adopt Agenda:** Sara Lancaster stated that proper notice was given. *Motion (Freix, Hackbarth) to adopt the agenda as posted. Carried*

**Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):** *Motion (Freix, Hackbarth) to approve the minutes from the July 28, 2020 meeting. Carried*

**Public Comment:** None

**Petition for Grant of Variance:** Petition for Grant of Variance Application, Parcel # 014-02-33312731J2, 9218 Spring Rd. Karl W. Erickson proposes petitions for a variance from Section 3.12(6)(a) of the Door County Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance.

**Merline opened the Hearing and Explained the Procedures.** Merline explained that the Town is under County zoning, and that tonight is so the Plan Commission can make a recommendation to the Town Board. The Town Board will then make a recommendation to the County. No final decisions will be made tonight.

Merline introduced the petitioner and why he is seeking a grant of variance this evening.

Mr. Erickson explained that he built his house and the shed in the 1970s during the energy crisis and before current zoning ordinance was adopted. At that time, he built his house with a smaller footprint to save energy. The current zoning now uses the square footage of the house to limit the total square footage of the accessory buildings. In his case the total square footage of his small house is less than the total square footage of his existing shed and the purposed garage. Therefore, the small footprint of his house will prevent him from building the garage unless he qualifies for a variance.

Merline stated that variances are exceptions to the zoning code and explained the three criteria that are used to grant or deny them. Mr. Erickson explained that the garage would be located in a wooded area more than 200 feet from any neighbor.

Marge Bultman, Greywood Rd, Fish Creek, asked what part of the property it is going on. Erickson replied it is going in the middle of the lot. Merline clarified that according to the map it will be located in the middle and adjacent to the driveway.

Merline asked if any Plan Commission members have questions for Mr. Erickson. Don Freix said he viewed the lot, and it appeared to be a larger lot and well wooded, which posed no concern. Freix did not see any reason to deny the variance. He also concurred with the hardship of attaching a garage to the roof of the existing home in this particular situation. Also, the proposed location of the new garage seems to be originally planned for.

Merline asked if there were any additional questions from the audience.

### **Testimony in Support:**

Several nearby property owners testified in support of the variance, including:

Jody Selenica –Neighbors to the east; they had nothing against the variance being granted.

Marge Bultman – Own property across the street and have no objection either.

Dave Kokalj – Another neighbor across the street; he stated he had no issues either.

**Testimony in Opposition:** None

**Rebuttal:** None

**Correspondence in Support:** None

**Correspondence in Opposition:** None

### **Merline Closed the Hearing:**

Hackbarth saw no reason to not recommend the variance be granted. Merline said she felt the same way seeing as it is a modest garage and Erickson showed evidence of reasonable hardship. Tom Blackwood also stated that he is comfortable with the plan presented and moving forward with a recommendation in favor of the variance.

*Motion (Hackbarth, Freix) to approve the variance as submitted. Carried.*

Merline explained to the petitioner that this recommendation will now go to the Town Board at their next regular monthly meeting. Merline encouraged Mr. Erickson to attend that meeting. The recommendation made by the Town Board will then go on to the County, who will make the final decision as to whether the variance will be granted.

## **Goal 11: Meeting the Town's Immediate Economic Needs**

Merline turned this agenda item over to Hackbarth. Hackbarth stated that one of the Town's most urgent needs is to find a solution to the lack of accessible high-speed internet. Grant money is available, but in order to get the grant money there needs to be a private sector business that provides the internet.

Hackbarth also presented the idea of shared office spaces within the town that had high-speed internet and could provide a place where people could work from "home". This would not be for companies but for individuals that can't get high speed internet at their home.

The expense associated with high-speed internet is another obstacle and hardship.

Freix commented that he has looked into broadband and has made recommendations to Door County Economic Development Corporation. He stated that one of the obstacles facing rural Wisconsin is a state law that prevents local government from competing with private providers. He encouraged the PC to talk to Representative Kitchens about this obstacle, as well as research Reedsburg, Wisconsin, which has a city-owned utility and has found a solution to high speed internet.

Hackbarth mentioned zoning challenges that may need to be addressed. He also added the migration of employees of large companies relocating here that need access to high-speed internet in order to do their work. He said a short-term solution is needed while the Town explores and considers long-term, larger infrastructure solutions.

Merline asked about additional solutions other than talking to Kitchens. Freix said he will send some relevant information to the Town office that can be shared with the Plan Commission.

There was discussion about possible locations within the Town that could act as internet hubs. Hackbarth asked about the Old Town Hall or other Town locations. Merline said she would have a discussion with Beth Hagen about possible solutions. Freix said that in light of COVID-19, it would be difficult for the Town to open up a building to the public. He liked the idea but acknowledged the current situation might present some added challenges and liability.

The Plan Commission will continue to discuss this issue and generate possible ideas as to keep it moving toward some viable solutions. There is also opportunity for this topic to fit into the upcoming revision of the Comprehensive Plan.

## **2021 Plan Commission Budget**

The Plan Commission received an updated budget. Merline stated that she feels the Green Tier budget could be reduced for next year. Due to COVID-19 all meetings are being conducted through Zoom, and that will likely continue for the foreseeable future. Merline suggested since travel expenses will be lower, the overall budget for Green Tier could be cut down a little bit. Hackbarth agreed. Merline suggested \$300 with that amount being revisited and adjusted in the future as the situation changes.

Regarding the Fish Passage grant money, Hackbarth asked if the part that is the Town's cost/share could

be done "in kind" by the Town's maintenance team. Merline said some of it might be able to, but some of it requires the work of engineer. It was noted to make sure the grant funds are reflected on the income side as well.

Suggested to reduce the advertising budget to \$350.00

*Motion (Hackbarth, Blackwood) to approve the budget requests to be submitted to the Town Board.  
Carried.*

## **Goal 10: Green Tier Legacy Community Commitments & Activities**

Merline attended a Green Tier meeting in early August via Zoom. Previously, the Plan Commission looked at the GT scoresheet and was disappointed on how it catered to larger municipalities. This meeting Merline attended presented a draft of a new scoresheet and a facilitator not connected with Green Tier asked those in attendance their opinions of the scoresheet. The Town of Gibraltar, Bayfield, New Richmond and the Wisconsin Rapids all shared similar comments that there was not enough on the scoresheet for communities of a smaller size.

Merline also learned that the scoresheet exists so the DNR can show progress in order to get grant money. Larger cities are able to get more points toward that grant money. Merline commented that it was interesting to hear the representative from Bayfield talk as they are a very tourist driven city like Gibraltar.

Lancaster went over the webpage for Green Tier. Once the web page is finished the link will be added under the Community section. Lancaster will also reach out to Town Web, the Town website host, to talk about any options that exist to make use of the right-hand side of the web page without changing the template. The goal is to have a very user-friendly design that presents a lot of information without a lot of visual clutter.

It was also noted that Door County has become a Green Tier Legacy County.

Merline said she will reach out to people and organizations in the community about GTLC after Labor Day.

Hackbarth mentioned that when the Town goes to buy its next maintenance vehicle, they should be looking at an electric vehicle to coincide with the Green Tier goals. Merline also reported that Beth Hagen informed her two more electric vehicle charging stations were going to be installed at the Town Center.

## **Reports**

- a. **Chair Report** – Nothing has moved from last month. Still answering questions of the DOT on the design for the box culvert. Regarding the meander, Nick Legler and Gary VanVreede did walk the meander but they have not reported much on that. Nick asked a question and forwarded the information to his boss, but Linda doesn't have anything much more on that to report back.

The Town did approve the seed mix for along spring road from the Invasive Species team.

- b. **Ground and Surface Water - None**
- c. **Town Board/Parks and Lands** - Hackbarth said Parks & Lands would like to begin the planting work, but they don't want to plant trees if they will be torn up by that project. Linda said she has no idea when that work would be done. Merline said planting could take place in other areas of the park, just not near the meander.

**Set Next Meeting Date:** Tuesday, October 27, 2020 at 7 p.m.

**Adjourn:** *Motion (Freix, Hackbarth) to adjourn at 8:37 p.m. Carried*