

Minutes - Woodbury County Zoning Commission – August 26, 2024

The Zoning Commission (ZC) meeting was called to order on August 26, 2024, at 5:00 PM in the Board of Supervisors' meeting room, located in the basement of the Woodbury County Courthouse, 620 Douglas Street, Sioux City, IA. The meeting was also available via teleconference.

Meeting Audio:

For a detailed account of this meeting, refer to the recorded video on the Woodbury County Zoning Commission's "Committee Page" on the Woodbury County website:

- County Website: https://www.woodburycountyiowa.gov/committees/zoning_commission/
- YouTube Direct Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqkPberPnWE>

Members Present: Barb Parker, Corey Meister, Chris Zant

Staff Present: Dan Priestley, Dawn Norton

Public Attendees: Michael Montino, Dan Bittinger

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair Chris Zant called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM. Tom Bride and Jeff Hanson were absent.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion by Meister to approve the July 22 minutes. Seconded by Parker. Approved 3-0.

DISCUSSION AND PLANNING PROCESS FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY TO BE CONSIDERED FOR ADDITION TO WOODBURY COUNTY ZONING ORDINANCE (INFORMATION /

DISCUSSION ITEM) SUMMARY: The Woodbury County Board of Supervisors, at their July 2, 2024 meeting, directed the Zoning Commission to explore the possibility of nuclear energy in the county. This discussion focused on the next steps for work sessions and public hearings. Dan Priestley outlined that establishing a nuclear power plant is a highly regulated process, with extensive site studies required to determine suitability. Michael Montino from Woodbury County Emergency Management, who studied nuclear energy at Georgetown University, shared his knowledge of nuclear power plants. He explained that these plants generally operate using pressurized boiling water to generate steam, and proximity to a water source is crucial to maintain cooling levels and prevent core meltdowns. Montino discussed the importance of considering factors such as drought, flooding, and earthquakes when selecting a site. An Emergency Planning Zone extending 50 miles around the plant would be necessary, affecting neighboring counties. Although nuclear energy could take up to 30 years to fully implement, it is essential to plan for future energy needs as older coal plants are retired. Repurposing these sites for nuclear power could reduce the need for eminent domain. Priestley emphasized that this is an exploratory phase, and the county has not yet received significant public feedback. He suggested that establishing a conditional use permit could demonstrate the county's openness to nuclear energy development. Future work sessions, public hearings could be scheduled to explore the issue further.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION ITEM ABOUT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS' CONSIDERATION OF CHANGES TO THE COMMERCIAL WIND ENERGY CONVERSION SYSTEMS (C-WECS) (INFORMATION / DISCUSSION ITEM) SUMMARY:

Following a petition from the public at the 2024 Woodbury County Fair, the Board of Supervisors, on August 6, 2024, directed staff to review and potentially revise Ordinance #56, which governs commercial wind energy systems. This discussion provided information on the upcoming review process. Dan Priestley reported that the County Attorney's Office is currently reviewing revisions to the ordinance, particularly concerning setbacks between participating and non-participating properties, decommissioning requirements, and setback waivers. These revisions aim to address safety concerns, such as lightning and fire risks. Public hearings will be held to gather input from the community.

HOME OCCUPATION SIGNS ZONING REGULATIONS REVIEW (INFORMATION / DISCUSSION ITEM) SUMMARY: The Zoning Commission reviewed home occupation sign regulations to determine if any changes are needed. Research shows that Woodbury County's policies are consistent with those of other Iowa counties, with a few counties allowing slightly larger signs.

PUBLIC COMMENT ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

STAFF UPDATE

At the August 27 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Supervisors are expected to direct the Planning & Zoning Director to collaborate with the Board of Adjustment, Zoning Commission, and legal counsel to recommend decommissioning requirements as part of a new ordinance regarding carbon pipelines. Additionally, the Board of Adjustment has deferred its decision on a conditional use application for a data center/bitcoin mining facility for 35 days. The applicant is expected to provide additional information at the rescheduled September 4 meeting.

COMMISSIONER COMMENT OR INQUIRY

None

Motion to Adjourn:

Motion by Meister to adjourn. Seconded by Parker. Motion carried 3-0. The meeting adjourned at 5:53 PM.