MINUTES OF THE CITY OF OKOBOJI PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 16, 2024 – 11:30 AM

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the City of Okoboji met on the above date and time at the Okoboji City Hall. Commission members present were Doris Welle, Barbara Mendenhall, John McMahon, Hank Grant, and Perry Pearson. Others present were City Administrator Michael Meyers.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairperson Pearson initiated a discussion about the airport property located at 1710 Sanborn Avenue. City Administrator Meyers provided background, explaining that this issue first arose around 2022, when there was a proposal to construct a new hangar at the airport. Upon receiving inquiries about the matter, Meyers investigated and found that the airport is a non-conforming use within a residentially zoned (R-1) district. He noted that the airport does not have a special use permit and that "aviation facility" is neither a conditional nor permissible use in an R-1 zoning district.

According to the City's zoning regulations, non-conforming uses are not allowed to expand. Based on this, Meyers expressed that the City should not issue a zoning permit for the new hangar, as it would constitute an expansion of the non-conforming use.

Meyers acknowledged that in both 2010 and 2015, the City of Okoboji had issued building permits for new hangars, and the airport authority had questioned why permits could not be issued now. Meyers explained that he believed the previous permits were granted due to an administrative oversight before his tenure, and he did not feel it was appropriate to continue with the same process.

Meyers emphasized that his goal was to resolve the situation to ensure clarity and prevent future confusion regarding airport expansions. He reiterated that this discussion was not an effort to hinder the airport but to ensure proper procedures were followed.

Meyers shared that he had met with the Airport Authority Board and presented two potential solutions to address the issue. The first option was to amend the R-1 zoning district to include "aviation facilities" as a conditional use. The second option was to rezone the airport property to an A-1 (Agricultural) zoning district, where "aviation facilities" are already a conditional use. Regardless of the option, the airport would need to apply for a conditional use permit to proceed with any future expansions. Meyers sought guidance from the Planning and Zoning Commission on how to move forward.

Meyers also referenced the City's comprehensive plan, which designates the future land use of the airport property as single-family residential. The Commission discussed the long-term implications of rezoning the property to A-1, considering whether it would negatively affect the property's value. They also noted that if the airport were ever to close, the property would likely be purchased for residential subdivision.

Meyers clarified that the ultimate goal was for the airport to obtain a conditional use permit that clearly outlines its allowed activities. Commissioner McMahon inquired if the zoning could automatically revert to residential upon the sale of the property, but Meyers stated that such an automatic reversion was unlikely.

Commissioner Grant suggested it might be more logical to keep the property zoned R-1 in case the airport ceases operations in the future. Commissioner McMahon questioned the drawbacks of leaving the property as R-1, to which Meyers responded that it was unusual to have an "aviation facility" in a residential zoning district, and that in theory, this use could be applied to all R-1 properties.

The Commission then discussed the possibility of limiting the lot size for properties that could apply for a conditional use permit for an aviation facility. After further deliberation, the general consensus of the Commission was to prefer amending the R-1 zoning district to allow "aviation facilities" as a conditional use, with restrictions on lot size. The Commission requested City Staff to develop more specific details and present them at a future meeting.

Chairperson Pearson then introduced a discussion on lakeshore landscaping. City Administrator Meyers provided an update on recent applications that had been submitted and approved under the recently adopted emergency clause.

Meeting adjourned at 12:35 PM.

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Michael Meyers, City Administrator