

COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE: Development & Planning (D&P)

CHAIRPERSON: Diane Gallagher, Chairperson

DATE/TIME: March 28, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT:

☒ Diane Gallagher

☒ Steve Endress

☒ John Schultz

☒ Steve McIntyre

☒ Bob Heuerman

☒ LaDon Trost

☒ John Lang

A quorum was established.

Other Board members: None.

Others: David Schmit, Kristina Tranel, Scott Toot, Tara Walters and Brandon Malton, from MSA Professional Services.

1. Approval of Minutes –

- a) Review and approve minutes for the February 28, 2023 Development & Planning Committee meeting – John Schultz made a motion to approve the minutes for the February 28, 2023 Development & Planning Committee meeting. Seconded by John Lang and motion passed following a voice vote resulting in all ayes.

2. Citizens' Comments – None.

3. Unfinished Business

- a) Discussion and possible action on renewable energy PA 102-1123 impact and possible local actions for regulation – Diane Gallagher commented that this says it cannot be more restrictive and that she appreciates all the information and suggestions Kristina Tranel has given. Tranel said she attended the training that the Illinois Association of County Board Members held the other day. They went over some of the gray areas in this act. The model ordinances for commercial wind and solar were also gone over. The current ordinance on wind energy does have some of the operational standards that are found in the model, with some changes to a couple of things. Currently, we do not have any standards for commercial solar, so this is great information for us to potentially include in it. Her understanding is that we need to be compliant with the State act by May 26th to ensure that we have local regulatory power. Schultz asked if there was anything in there about the eventual disposal of materials once something is defunct. Tranel replied that is now going to be based on the agricultural impact mitigation agreement that the Illinois Department of Agriculture would review and that dollar amount would come from that, minus the salvage value of it, assuming that there's a cost benefit to doing that. There are a lot of changes she'd like to discuss. She knows that for the text amendment they have to have a Public Hearing with the Planning Commission and they have to forward a recommendation to the County Board. That gives us some time that we have to work back from. With the May 26th deadline we are getting close. What she would prefer to do is get in there what we need and work through what we need to go through some of these other requirements. McIntyre said the Board of Appeals turned down a commercial solar farm recently, and he assumes the only reason is that a neighbor complained. He expressed concern over why this was turned down. The output could potentially power the entire Village of Stockton, so he found it surprising that people were opposed. He said Stockton's median income is only \$48,000, and the national average is \$69,000. You might as well say Stockton is a low-income town and we would be creating affordable power and we turned it down. Trost pointed out another thing; this solar system would've gone directly to the distribution center in Stockton and nowhere else. He was pleased that they at least moved it forward to the County Board to vote on. Heuerman feels that the Board of Appeals is more worried about the decommissioning of these solar farms than they are about getting them going. McIntyre mentioned that at least for solar, they're poles that can be put into the ground. When they are finished after 25 or so years, the poles can be removed and the land can be reclaimed as farmland, as opposed to wind

turbines that require a substantial amount of concrete being put into the ground. Tranel talked about the decision that was made. There was a negative recommendation, or the recommendation was denied. She said she would prefer to refer to the minutes before she commented much more on the outcome. There was more discussion on the topic. No action was taken.

- b) **Jo Daviess County Housing Study updates** – Gallagher said the only progress she can report is that she is starting to make invitations and get memos out to the communities that would be most interested in housing. When we think about the need for housing, it exists mostly in the incorporated areas. We are just getting started on that. Heuerman said in Stockton there is not a lot available for housing. There really isn't a lot out there. He went to a realtor there and asked if he wanted to buy a house tomorrow, would they have anything? They told him nothing is ready to go. There are a lot of fixer-uppers and empty homes. Nobody is rehabbing anymore. Schmidt said that the NWILED Board is meeting in a couple weeks and that housing is on the agenda and he will have a clearer direction on the direction his board wants him to take on this study. At minimum, he has started to build out a new page on their website with tricks, tools, resources and references. If a developer is going to be considering Jo Daviess County, they're going to be looking at organizational websites and what we have to offer, and he wants to make sure he has this front and center.

4. New Business

- a) **Discussion and possible action on a contract with MSA for Comprehensive Plan Update – MSA and Planning & Development Office** – Tara Walters and Brand Malton from MSA Professional Services were in attendance. Walters thanked the County for accepting their proposal. She went over the proposal and the scope of services. They have an entire planning team in two different states. There are a number of staff that will be extensively involved in this project. Gallagher thanked Walters and informed her how excited she was to have a company that was relatively local to Jo Daviess. Walters went over the schedule in the scope of services. She said there are Comprehensive Planning Committee meetings and that would serve as the Steering Committee. She said it should have 5-8 people, preferable no more than 8. She said that a lot of this will happen virtually. There are two in person meetings; the first and the last meetings. She is hoping by December or January they will be adopting. Gallagher asked if it would be suitable to have some alternate members for the committee, so you would always have 5-8 in attendance. She also asked if others could zoom in but not take an active role. Walters replied that that would be fine. According to Scott Toot, County Administrator, these would be public meetings so we would have to post meeting notices and inform the public. **John Schultz made a motion to approve a contract with MSA Professional Services to update the Comprehensive Plan, with the a la carte options, for a total of \$48,150. Seconded by Bob Heuerman and motion carried following a voice call vote resulting in all ayes.**
- b) **Review schedule of Comprehensive Plan process** – The committee went over the schedule of the Comprehensive Plan process in the MSA proposal with Tara Walters.
- c) **Educational review of LESA process used for requests for Special Use** – Gallagher asked Tranel if she would give the committee a guideline on what she goes through with the processing of a site. Tranel read through the factors that go into the scoring. Gallagher mentioned that in reading the manual, it does go through a lot of history and detail, and it's really a beautifully written document. It is worthwhile. They explain what factors can impact short and long term. McIntyre expressed his concern on the 40-acre rule and saving farmland when it comes to zoning. He feels the land evaluation should be taken into consideration more than the site assessment when looking at the 40-acre rule. Much discussion was held on the assessment of farmland and zoning of property. Trost commented that we need to do something to make this work. He wants the County to stop talking about these things and actually be able to do something about them. Gallagher pointed out that she understands what he was saying and that is one of the reasons we chose MSA Professional Services; it's a more compressed process to do the comprehensive plan. She said that we have more experience than many people out in the County, but we do have a responsibility to listen to other people out there. There are people who want to come visit Jo Daviess because they like the rural look. There are also people in the communities who are asking

for help and more services. We are talking about economic development as much as we are home sites. There are so many factors that could affect not only rural, but also communities. If we try to jump into this major change, she feels like we're making a mistake. Trost suggested we bring this up to MSA so they can look at it and consider it in the Comprehensive Plan. Lang agreed. Tranel said she thinks it would be appropriate. McIntyre mentioned how the ZBA does use the current Comprehensive Plan in the Staff Reports. They do use it as a baseline for the zoning. The committee continued to discuss many points about the LESA scoring. Gallagher suggested that maybe we could reach out to UCCI and ask a question to the other counties regarding their LESA scoring and whether they have revised their LESA scoring method, or if they've made a change to their rural requirements.

5. Reports

a) Building & Zoning

- (i) Monthly Report – Kristina Tranel, Planning & Development Administrator, reported that they had 17 total building permits in the month of February, compared to 14 in 2022 and just 11 in 2021. Estimated construction value is just over 2 million. Out of those permits, they included 3 new homes, 8 accessory buildings and 2 alternative energy source permits. People are continuing to build as demonstrated in these permits. Additionally, there have been 26 new guest accommodations as of December 1st. These are mixture of single family homes and townhomes. Some are in the resort community and some are in some agricultural areas in larger lots. She is estimating the total over 600 in the County now. Schultz asked if maybe at some point we should put a cap on those types of establishments, to make more housing available. There was some discussion on short-term rental properties versus long-long term rental properties. Tranel spoke about the residential solar permits. It's a \$75 base fee for the building review, plus \$4 per \$1,000 of cost value. There is also a \$25 zoning review of it.

b) Economic Development

- (i) NW Illinois Economic Development Monthly Report – David Schmit, NW Illinois Economic Development Executive Director, reported on the Manufacturing and Trades Day. It was smaller with student numbers. There were 180 kids, 100 less than last year. Schmit has received a lot of feedback. Three of the businesses he has heard from have plans to hire some of the attendees. They see it as an employment opportunity. It's really a great event. They're toying with the idea of potentially having it back in the fall again. There was quite a bit of food left over from the event, so it was donated to the Galena Food Pantry. He would enjoy taking the students to a site where they're installing a wind turbine or something of that sort, someday. The State finally came out with some new Covid programs for hotels, restaurants and bars. NWILED is heavily marketing these new programs. They're assisting businesses with getting applications in that may need some help. This is going to be very good for a number of the businesses. The application opens April 5th. There were some media outlets notified and there was a mailer sent out too. The NWILED C-PACE Regional Meeting with the Illinois Finance Authority is scheduled for April 13th at the NWILED office in Hanover. Invites have been sent out to attendees in the surrounding counties. The purpose is to bring awareness of the newly revised program to decision makers who can then option to continue to conversation with the IFA and get the program enabled in their community. NWILED issued a second letter of support for the re-establishment of passenger rail service from Chicago to Dubuque through Rockford, Freeport and Galena. Letters were sent to Illinois elected officials requesting they voice their support to the Illinois Department of Transportation for planning and development funding from the Federal Railroad Administration

c) Blackhawk Hills Regional Council –

- (i) Diane Gallagher reported that they had a meeting yesterday. During the meeting, it was reported that the Invest in Illinois Act that had passed, gives a large

business attraction funds in the amount of \$400,000. It increases the maximum size of the existing Enterprise Zones, from 15 acres, to 20 acres. There are monies that are going to be available for anything to do with walkability and EV charging stations. Gallagher said that there wasn't any update on the trail from Savanna to the Palisades. Schmit commented that the City of Savanna is working with Dan Payette in order to get the last stretch of a bike path that comes from the Quad Cities and stops in Savanna. They want to get the trail to connect Savanna to the Palisades State Park. At that point, they want to get it from the Savanna Army Depot to Chestnut.

6. Citizens' Comments – None.

- 7. Board Member Concerns** – McIntyre said there was a lot of good discussion tonight and he thought it was very productive. Trost commented that when he took over as Chairperson, there were three main things he really wanted to accomplish. The first was the Compensation Plan, which they are currently working on. Second was the Courthouse renovation project, and the third was Economic Development. These three things are very important; especially Economic Development because it helps the future of our County. He spoke of the Economic Development fund in the County's budget. That has been established for some time. He went on to explain how our youth are the most important and significant resource we have for the future development of our County. These youth graduate and go to college, and because there's very little economic encouragement for them to return, they find jobs or develop businesses in more urban areas of the country. Because of this scenario, the population of our County is aging at an increasing and alarming rate. It's imperative that we as members of the Development & Planning Committee and higher County Board, find new and innovative ways to promote and encourage new businesses into our County, and ensure the businesses currently in our County are sustainable and that our youth have a reason to return after college. He went on to explain some economics within the County and the different categories of businesses that are sustainable here.

8. Adjourn

The next regular Development & Planning Committee meeting will be Tuesday, April 25, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m. following a motion made by John Lang and seconded by Steve McIntyre. Motion passed following a voice vote resulting in all ayes.