



JO DAVIESS COUNTY, ILLINOIS

MINUTES

ZONING AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 17, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

*Jo Daviess County Administrative Offices (Temporary Location)
Former Galena Primary School – 219 Kelly LN, Galena, IL*

CALL TO ORDER:

Chair **CASSENS** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Trost, Cassens, Engle (on-line), Baranski, D Gallagher, Holland, Dittmar, Meeker, McIntyre, Jones (arrived 6:09 p.m.), Deininger, Creighton, Caswell (arrived 6:08 p.m.), and Heitkamp (on-line)

Absent: None

Also Present: Angela Kaiser, County Administrator

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

MEEKER: noted that there are a number of minor typos in the minutes that he will just make the corrections. Deininger noted that references to “the Territories” should actually be “The Galena Territory”. McIntyre noted that the minutes show him as present; he was absent. Baranski requested that references to “GA” in the minutes should be spelled out as “Guest Accommodations”.

Motion by **BARANSKI**, seconded by **DEININGER** to approve the minutes of the May 17, 2025 meeting, with corrections as noted.

Motion Carried: 11-0-2 (**CASWELL** and **JONES** absent at the time of the vote)

CITIZENS COMMENTS:

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

DAVID SCHMIDT (NW ILLINOIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT): Was asked by Beth Baranski to come and talk a little bit about the importance of planning for housing development and industrial development. It is something my organization as the economic development organization for Jo Daviess, Carroll, and Whiteside Counties to monitor those things.

I think we're all familiar with the housing study that did come out a few years ago that did stress the need for more housing development. When it comes to zoning specifically, the way you should interpret that data is for working class accommodations, stressing the value in the building of apartments, five-unit and greater apartment structures. Galena, I think, is looking at dorms with the Blackjack cutoff. That's a perfect example of what workforce housing is. Workforce housing is typically \$200,000 value home and under. You could be looking at it through a couple of different lenses depending on what sort of development you're doing. The builders I do hear from that are local, they are wanting to do individual units, maybe through a phased development approach to their building.

We have not, even after numerous marketing efforts, been able to attract large commercial builders to our region. But mind you, we were doing this after the pandemic and then into the present era. There are tools out there that developers can use that the State of Illinois has. I think the County having their new housing assistance first time home buyer program definitely is a positive, but I don't think it's really to create more workforce housing. I think it's more of an end-user type incentive and that's fine; they go together well. With housing, you're going to want to pursue from a zoning perspective terms like high density residential. And

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Galena does have that zoning in place. That's the only community that I'm aware of, but from a workforce housing standpoint and a zoning perspective, that's what the County should be encouraging is true workforce housing and high-density development.

With industrial development, we are making we're making progress on the Stockton Industrial Park that's been proposed in recent months. There will be an application going into the site readiness program that was announced by Governor Pritzker last week. The mechanisms for the program are still being defined by the consultant that will be running the program for the State, as well as Illinois Commerce. Coincidentally, after a conversation with City of Galena on another matter, the City of Galena is also interested in applying for their own 100-acre parcel. So really the county could foresee two applications going in simultaneously. But I really want to stress because calls have come from the general public that this is for feasibility work. We don't know if Stockton or Galena is really the right fit for a 100-acre industrial park, and if it is, the feasibility and the market analysis is going to tell us how to build that out. So once we know thumbs up to one or both or neither, but if they are positive, the study work that we're going to be putting in a grant of fund will show us, Stockton might be better suited for a food processing manufacturer that employs 20 to 32 workers. Where Galena might be better suited for a different industry. So if we're going to be successful with bringing anything new online, the long-term planning for these is very much recommended by my organization in order for them to be successful, not just for the County, but for the tenants that end up moving in there.

I do want to stress that a lot of our industrial parks in Jo Daviess, Carroll, Northwest Illinois, are little antiquated in terms of some of their utility capacity. So in addition to looking at sites, not just from a land standpoint and maybe a proximity to interstates or population centers, you really need to be in good conversation with all the utilities. And that's where an organization like mine comes to a head. JCE co-op is a primary member, Nicor Gas, ComEd, ITC transmission, railroad utility at the depot. So we really have a great understanding of pulling together the utilities with landowners, with units of government in order to make applications work for all of us.

Now, with that said, we are pursuing opportunities in Carroll County for different large developments and we are forming a regional alliance with Gary Comorato and Whiteside County Economic Development in order to be well positioned to field these large clients. One of which we've been talking with very much recently in the last month and a half for a very extremely large, proposed large site down by Thompson which is private conversation but it has been put out there slightly. And in those situations, the alliance that we're forming with Whiteside is going to be bringing in a new high-level expertise and various functions that we don't have that skill set in. So, my organization, Jo Daviess County as a primary member, is going to benefit from that long-term thinking about how do we not just talk about Jo Daviess and Carroll County but Northwest Illinois as a region and even beyond that with our partners in Iowa and Wisconsin and really take a regional approach to attracting these large clients. 80% of my organization's time is spent with mom and pops, small businesses, small manufacturers but when you're looking at primary tenants and new industrial parts, anchor tenants, those are the levels of expertise that you're going to need in order to communicate at that level with these clients. And we've been doing that very well so far. So we'll look to replicate that when Galena and Stockton come online or any large housing developer. That said, for the mom and pops that want to build housing, Christine Soat did this before she became one of our contractors; she identified under 3,000 acres of land that we feel is perfect for housing development. So Stockton took cue of that, sorry, not Stockton, Scales Mound took cue of that and in recent months has been looking to do that development on the north side of the CN rail line. That came out as a result of reinforcing the need for housing. So the need is out there. It's just really matching it to a builder versus a developer. I do just quickly want to touch on a few other things that have come up over the last, I'd say two to three years that are specific to zoning that I've heard about. And I'll just kind of go through these. I did get a call from a real estate agent who has horse property that she's trying to repurpose that's in

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Derinda Valley. And there were some issues, whether it should be marketed as commercial or agricultural. They have stables. I didn't ever really foresee this as not being a commercial entity. And so there was some conversation about how does that fall with zoning being between agricultural and commercial. That's a hard site to backfill. And I think given the number of horse retail businesses and equestrian centers, it is a niche industry that often kind of doesn't really get recognized. I did get this was an agri-tourism business. They had some issues with zoning as they related to the Jo Daviess County Small Business Development Grant. They weren't able to move forward with your original application because they were looking to add a structure to their site, but was told they couldn't until they built a house. That was Dry Creek Beekeeping. And at the end, they ended up getting a grant. They rewrote their application for something else. It didn't prevent the grant, but it made them rethink their business plan. We always get calls for what's available on Highway 20 in Elizabeth, in Galena. Once a month somebody's asking for that and that that's hard to find. So if you look from what does the county control, some of those calls actually have come from Woodbine which is unincorporated; there are some businesses and homes in Woodbine would like to be allowed to go to commercial. I think you could quickly fill those up. Everybody understands on a Saturday in July there are 13,000 cars going through Jo Daviess County on Highway 20 and retailers especially take note of that. Woodbine would be an area where you may want to look at to do some sort of exception to allow commercial in Woodbine and other pockets, maybe allow along Highway 20 between East Dubuque and Galena. In Menominee there are already a number of commercial businesses and maybe try to rezone some of that to mixed-use. Northwest Illinois Economic Development supports the Blackjack cut-off project. I know that's another collaboration between the County and a municipality and I think given the I mean it's just continuing more and more but Blackjack is a commercial corridor in my eyes; there are vacation rentals, large employers like Chestnut Mountain and Goldmoor. It is a region that needs support and if you can somehow divert some of that traffic out of Galena it's only going to help the tourism market in Galena, especially during peak season.

CASSENS: Thank-you very much for your presentation. We look forward to your participation in our meeting this evening.

KAISER: We received a comment for citizens comments that I'll read now into the minutes from Ron Mapes in Stockton. Want to give you my thoughts on zoning changes. I was on the original committee when zoning was brought forward in Joe Davis County. I've also been on the planning commission and zoning board of appeals for the last 16 years. I agree zoning ordinances should be reviewed every five years. Zoning should follow the Jo Daviess County Comprehensive Plan. Without zoning this country would have been a disaster by not having any guidelines to help Jo Daviess County move forward. Zoning has not stopped Jo Daviess County moving forward. Jo Daviess County does not have the infrastructure to bring companies here. The first thing businesses look for is infrastructure, transportation, rail service, and river transportation. The western part of the county has the best infrastructure. Jo Daviess County is known for tourism and agriculture, which are comprehensive plan states. Zoning has not stopped small businesses coming to Jo Daviess County. Keeping our youth to stay in Jo Daviess County has not been caused by our zoning ordinances. 40-acre ordinance seems to get a lot of attention. 40-acre ordinance has been falsely presented when visitors come to Jo Daviess County to look for a place to build a residence. Everyone hears they have to buy 40-acres to build a residence. This is not true. It needs to be brought to the public's attention that you do not have to have 40-acres to build a new residence. Everybody that has purchased over three acres states it is too much too care for. I know of one special use request that came before the committee got denied because of setbacks and infringing on neighbors. That has been the only case that has got denied in all my years on the committee. The fees on special use permits are not out of line with today's building cost. When a special use permit is granted all of the requirements are met and all they need to do is apply for a building permit. Agriculture is one of our leading points in our comprehensive plan and tillable ground should be preserved. The 40-acre ordinance is working

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and should be left in place. There are some ordinances that could be changed so the Zoning Administrator could be in charge. Zoning was written to have orderly development and adjoining landowners have a voice. Example you have a home on three acres of ground and your neighbor owns a hundred acres and wants to sell to a company that wants to build a blacktop plant. Without zoning the blacktop plant could be built. With zoning they would have to go through the process and adjoining landowners would have a voice. My opinion on engaging a company to give their opinion on our zoning ordinances is a waste of money. Zoning was written for the residents of Jo Daviess County and if the consulting firm looks at the zoning ordinances and wants to rewrite it takes away the original thoughts. I am not saying that some changes need to be made, but the committee can make changes with legal help. My opinion is that a few changes always need to be made over time, but the basic ordinances are still working for the residents. Thank you for listening to my comments. I have been through this process before and it can be handled by the committee. Signed, Ron Mapes.

CASSENS: Thank-you Ron Mapes; the subcommittee welcomes any and all participation of submission of ideas and thoughts. Before we get down to serious business I want to make mention that I failed you as a chairperson last meeting because I failed to put points on the board. We had a good meeting, good discussion, but we did not put any points on the board with regard to even a motion hitting the table and maybe we can change that but I will do better on my part. That being said I do want to poll the committee. My purpose of polling the committee here is not to for judgmental purposes but I thought about something this kind of kind of tails into where we started on unintended consequences and where we hit an item in our second meeting of saying that population decline the county will be void of people in 66 or 67 years and then we started to mention desire to welcome those that are here to stay here welcome those that want to find a new home to make this a new home. So it will sound like I'm asking you how big your tribe is and that's not part of the question. It will sound like I'm asking you where is your tribe and that's not part of the question either and I'm going to need a mathematician; Mike (Dittmar) once again calling upon your duties. So what I'd like to do is I'd like everyone to consider volunteering answers to the question and we'll start with Steve (McIntyre) and go clockwise. What's the question? The question is how many kids do you have? How many live in the State of Illinois? How many live in Jo Daviess County?

MCINTYRE: Number of Kids: 0, live in Illinois: 0, live in Jo Daviess County: 0.

TROST: Response inaudible.

D GALLAGHER: Number of Kids: 1, live in Illinois: 0, live in Jo Daviess County: 0.

CREIGHTON: Number of Kids: 3, live in Illinois: 2, live in Jo Daviess County: 1.

BARANSKI: Number of Kids: 1, live in Illinois: 0, live in Jo Daviess County: 0.

MEEKER: Number of Kids: 0, live in Illinois: 0, live in Jo Daviess County: 0.

DEININGER: Number of Kids: 1, live in Illinois: 1, live in Jo Daviess County: 1.

DITTMAR: Number of Kids: 4, live in Illinois: 4, live in Jo Daviess County: 4.

HOLLAND: Number of Kids: 3, live in Illinois: 3, live in Jo Daviess County: 3.

CASWELL: Number of Kids: 5, live in Illinois: 4, live in Jo Daviess County: 4.

CASSENS: Number of Kids: 3, live in Illinois: 0, live in Jo Daviess County: 0.

ENGLE: Number of Kids: 3, live in Illinois: 3, live in Jo Daviess County: 3

JONES: No response.

DITTMAR: 16 out of 30 children, which is 53%, still live at home.

CASSENS: I knew the poll would have plus or minus variances based on age and duly noted, but I was just looking to see, so where's the committee projecting themselves as compared to what do we see the county projecting themselves? That's all.

DITTMAR: I poll my students all the time. An unscientific poll in my classroom; two out of 10 say they'll stay. The rest want to get out of here.

NEW BUSINESS:

CASSENS: requested input from Subcommittee members regarding potential amendments to the Zoning and affiliated regulations; an extensive discussion ensued.

Proposed amendments are summarized below:

- **Section 7-1-3C Amendments, R106.1 Exceptions, Subsection a:** waiver of construction document preparation by a registered design professional; replace \$25,000 with \$100,000 and require this number to be adjusted by the CPI every five years.
- **Section 7-1-3C Amendments, R105.2, Subsection 1:** work exempt from a building permit: change 120 square feet to 600 square feet for structures not requiring a building permit.
- **Section 8-3A-4 Intensity of Use, Subsection B:** nonagricultural accessory area: eliminate restrictions on lot coverage for accessory structures (i.e. eliminate this section and its limitations).
- **Section 8-4C-5 Nonconforming signs, Subsection 3:** discontinuance of nonconforming signs: require notification to owners of these signs regarding the removal of the sign after 180-days of non-use.

CITIZENS COMMENTS:

None.

COMMITTEE MEMBER CONCERNS:

CASWELL and DITTMAR: suggested a review of Home Occupations at the next meeting; provided a summary of his edits to the ordinance.

ENGLE: suggested reviewing the land-use table at the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



William Meeker
Planning & Development Administrator