

Community Center Land Advisory Committee – June 3, 2019

Posted May 20, 2019 at 4 p.m. at the Town of Russell Garage, Town Clerk's Office and Town website. Notice sent to the Ashland Daily Press.

The meeting was called to order by Committee Chairman, Town Supervisor Mark Bugher at 9:15 a.m. at the Town of Russell Garage. Roll call was taken as follows; present committee members Mirka Nelson, Annalisa Bermel arrived later as the meeting was underway and Supervisor Jeff Benton. Clerk/Treasurer David L. Good and Committee member Mike Cariveau were excused.

Two electors and/or members of the public was present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

Approval of the agenda – A motion was made by Benton and seconded by Nelson to approve the agenda. The motion carried.

Public Input – Bugher called for public input. Wayne Nelson questioned how the scope of this committee was narrowed to just the land behind the Community Center. He believes the Town needs to look at highest and best use for the Little Sand Bay land and other lands within the Town that can be better utilized. The Town can probably earn income from Little Sand Bay greater than that being generated at this time. Rob Halvorson believes nothing should be done at Little Sand Bay. This property was to be for the use of Town residents. There are conflicts with boaters and kayakers. The land behind the Community Center should be allowed to return to forestry. It is no good for farm land and water is too deep for a well. Bugher explained what the Board's intention was for this committee to review the land behind the Community Center. The scope may be broadened by the Board at a later time but it is not the issue at hand today. Halvorson felt the National Park Service has not met the needs of the people within the Town.

Approval of minutes of December 18, 2018 – A motion was made by Benton and seconded by Nelson to approve the minutes. The motion carried.

Discussion regarding the committees purpose and goal – Nelson questioned if we are to look at the highest and best use for the land behind the Community Center. Bugher stated we could look at developing the land, sell it to a developer, or do nothing. If the land is sold, we need to look at how to acquire maximum financial benefit to the Town. Nelson asked if this would include how this land can most benefit the residents. Discussion followed about the shooting range and the LSB recreation area. It was felt the shooting range is currently an under used asset of the Town. The view corridor for the land behind the Community Center will change as the forest regenerates. A discussion was held regarding the difficulty of obtaining well water for this property. Benton felt that residential development is not the way to go at this time. He believes the land is suitable for renewable power generation such as wind turbines due to its elevation and proximity to Lake Superior. A renewable energy discussion followed with focus on wind power. Annalisa Bermel arrived at this time. Bugher summarized today's prior discussions for Bermel.

Issues Identified with land behind the Community Center:

1. Future obstruction of view corridor.
2. Drinking water (deep, costly wells).
3. Sewage disposal.
4. Maximize value to Town verses preservation.
5. Renewable energy (wind power).

6. Broaden the scope of the committee (LSB Recreation Area).
7. Possibly utilize property for marina support services out of Little Sand Bay.
8. The need to look globally at how this impacts the area, residents, future land owners, etc.

Brain Storming session to develop proposed strategies for this property:

1. What makes the Town of Russell today a desirable place to live?
 - a. Low population, a quiet place to live.
 - b. Access to recreational opportunities – Lake Superior, camping, boating, fishing, hiking, hunting, birding, ATV's, silent sports, motor sports, biking, winter camping, snowmobiling, ATV/UTVs, gambling, entertainment, public lands, public access, snow shoeing, dog sledding.
2. Why do buyers buy property in the Town of Russell verses adjoining areas? Russell land is more affordable.
3. Are VRBO's viable in the Town? A discussion followed about how current activities of this nature are operating in our region. Several specific operations were discussed. The good and bad aspects of VRBO's were discussed. Town of Bayfield's licensing of VROB's and Room Tax were discussed.
4. What are the benefits to long time residents in the Town? Old families tend to hold large parcels of property which is attractive.
5. Are there climate benefits? Yes, it is believed there are up to 30 additional growing days in the Town.
6. Are public lands important? Yes, currently only 2% of the land is residential and commercial. Vast areas of public land are attractive.
7. What are challenges today for Town residents?
 - a. Cellular and broadband communications.
 - b. Maintaining a viable, affordable workforce.
 - c. Affordable housing, life style,
 - d. By 2025 over 50% of Town population will be over 65 years of age. Their need to access services will be critical (food, health, medical, shopping, transportation, etc.).
8. What are core values of Town Comprehensive Plan?
 - a. Preserve the rural character.
 - b. Large land parcels.
9. What will Town look like in 25-years?
10. What is the Town of Russell "brand" or claim to fame?
 - a. "The northern most south shore of Lake Superior".
 - b. "Rural Characteristics" don't seem to do this.
11. What amenities are important to residents or others or draw people to the Town of Russell?
 - a. We don't seem to know the answer to this question.
 - b. What things don't we have that would benefit all? More campgrounds, winter camping, dog sledding, etc.
 - c. Campgrounds seem to be an item the Town needs more of such as yurts, or other year round use facilities. Discussion about yurts followed.
 - d. It is difficult for people to "spend money" in the Town to benefit residents, etc. We need things to keep people here. Many different ideas were discussed.
 - e. We should consider some type of "tour" activities in the Town. The "Seven Wonders of the Town of Russell".
12. What are uses of adjacent property?
 - a. Wedding venue was discussed.

Items for next Committee Meeting – Comprehensive Plan will be discussed. Bugher will investigate information on yurts.

Schedule next Committee Meeting – The Committee agreed to meet again at 10:00 a.m. on July 15, 2019 at the Town Garage.

A motion was made by Benton and seconded by Bermel to adjourn at 9:40 p.m. The motion carried.

The minutes respectfully submitted by:

David L. Good – Clerk/Treasurer