

WRIGHT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Meeting of: July 31, 2025

Minutes

The Wright County Planning Commission met on Thursday, July 31, 2025, in the County Commissioners Board Room at the Wright County Government Center, Buffalo, Minnesota. Chairman, Dan Mol, called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with members present: Jeanne Holland, Ken Felger, Sandy Greninger (arrived during item #3), and Dan Bravinder. Absent was Pat Mahlberg and noting that Larry Smith resigned. Brian Wold, Assistant County Attorney, was the legal counsel present. Barry Rhineberger, Planning & Zoning Administrator, represented the Planning & Zoning office.

ACTION ON JULY 11, 2025, MINUTES

Holland motioned to adopt the minutes for the July 11, 2025 meeting as printed. Seconded by Bravinder.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. **Allen Dubbeldee** – Cont. 6/12 & 7/11

LOCATION: 11066 PITTMAN AVE NW– PRT OF SE1/4 & GOV LT1 LY S OF LK CAROLIN and PRT OF NW1/4 NE1/4 in Section 04 & 09, all in Township 122, Range 28, Wright County, Minnesota. (Lake Caroline - Southside Twp.) Tax #217-000-044400, 217-000-091202, 217-000-091205 Property Owner: ALLEN & DEBS DUBBELDEE REVTR and ALLEN R DUBBELDEE & DEBS JM DUBBELDEE REVTR

Petitions to rezone that portion of tax parcels 217-000-044400, 217-000-091202, and 217-000-091205, north of County Road 3, as approved by the Board of Adjustment on 1/10/2025, from General Agriculture (AG) with a Residential-Recreational Shorelands District Overlay (S-2) to Agricultural/Residential (A/R) with a Residential-Recreational Shorelands District Overlay (S-2), as regulated in Sections 155.028, 155.047, 155.048 & 155.057, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

No representative present.

A. Rhineberger noted that this item was continued to allow staff and legal counsel to review the requirements for access along the lot's frontage. It was determined that direct access to new lots must be located within the frontage of the respective lot. Therefore, if the rezoning and subdivision are approved, a new driveway for the house currently under construction must be built to enter and exit from County Road 3, and that driveway must be used. Due to this requirement, the applicant requested that the matter be continued to the August 21st meeting so they can evaluate their options.

B. No comments from the public.

C. Motion made by Felger to continue the matter to the August 21st meeting, at the applicant's request. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Noted that Greninger was not present for this item.

2. **Kraina Land LLC** – Cont. 6/12

LOCATION: 3755 BRIARWOOD AVE SE - E 1-2 SW EXC PRT DESC IN BK 190-31 in Section 20, Township 119, Range 25, Wright County, Minnesota. (Crawford Lake - Rockford Twp.) Tax #215-100-203100 Property Owner: JEROLD A UNTIEDT & SUSAN J UNTIEDT

Petitions to rezone the north 32.43 acres of the property, as referenced on the Certificate of Description by Otto Associates Inc., Project No. 25-0166, from General Agriculture (AG) with a Residential-Recreational Shorelands District Overlay (S-2) to Urban/Rural Transition (R-1) with a Residential-Recreational Shorelands District Overlay (S-2), as regulated in Sections 155.028, 155.048, 155.049 & 155.057, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Paul Otto with Otto Associates and Phil Kothrade with Kraina Land LLC

- A. Rhineberger reminded the Commission that this item was continued for a site inspection. He noted that the concept plan includes a proposal for a new roadway. Since the Township has not provided any indication of whether it will accept the road, it would not be advisable to make a recommendation to the County Board regarding the rezoning at this time. Although no formal response has been received from the Township, they had indicated they would attend tonight's meeting.
- B. Otto stated that they plan to attend the next Township meeting and are requesting that the item be continued to the August meeting. However, they are present tonight to address any questions or concerns.
- C. Public Comment.
 - Nancy Norsby, member of the Rockford Township Board, stated that they had been waiting on additional information from their engineer and attorney. Those documents were received earlier today, and the item is now scheduled for the Township's first August meeting, allowing time to review the submitted materials.
- D. Mol asked the Commission if there were any additional questions or concerns. None were expressed.
- E. Bravinder moved to continue the matter to the August 21, 2025, meeting for further review and recommendation from the Township regarding the rezoning and willingness to accept a new road. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Noted that Greninger was not present for this item.

3. **SKIES LIMIT LLC** – New

LOCATION: XXXX Baker Ave NW – Part of GOVERNMENT LOTS 1 AND 2 in Section 11, Township 121, Range 26, Wright County, MN. (Silver Creek Twp.) Tax #216-000-114100. Property Owner: SKIES LIMIT LLC

Petitions for a Conditional Use Permit for a platted 4-lot residential Planned Unit Development subdivision with the extension of a Township roadway, as regulated in Sections 155.029, 155.049 & 155.057, Chapters 154 & 155, Title XV, Land Usage & Zoning of the Wright County Code of Ordinances and Subdivision Regulations.

Present: Paul Otto with Otto Associates.

- A. Rhineberger displayed the concept plan while reviewing the request. He noted that the Planning Commission visited the site on June 5, 2025. A new response from Silver Creek Township has not been received. However, subdivision approval and the Township's willingness to accept the extension of Baker Avenue NW were addressed during the rezoning phase, and the applicant was not required to revisit the Township on this matter. The concept plan presented is consistent with what was previously submitted during the rezoning phase of the project.
- B. Otto confirmed that the property layout remains unchanged. The updated concept plan now shows the locations of a primary and alternate septic site as well as proposed home sites. In conversations with the Township, they expressed comfort with both the proposed road and the overall concept plan.

(Commissioner Greninger arrived at 7:38 p.m.)

- C. Rhineberger mentioned that the property had previously gone through the Board of Adjustment earlier this year for lot line adjustments. These adjustments must be finalized before the preliminary plat can be submitted to the County Surveyor's Office. Otto stated he believes those will be completed within one to two weeks.
- D. No public comments were received.
- E. Bravinder asked whether the Township had indicated approval of the turnaround as shown on the concept plan. Otto confirmed this and added that they had discussed enlarging the "T" turnaround to allow additional space for snow storage. He noted that the Monticello Fire Department still needs to review the plan for emergency vehicle access. Rhineberger commented that minor adjustments to the concept plan may occur as the final plat is reviewed by various departments.
- F. Rhineberger stated that the proposed conditions include a requirement for a developer's agreement and surety for the road, to be held by the Township. He emphasized the need to ensure that the Township is comfortable with that responsibility and that a signed copy must be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Office. Otto responded that this had been discussed with the Township and that he believes they plan to have the Township attorney draft and manage the developer's agreement. Otto also noted that a Silver Creek Township Supervisor was present in the audience and could speak if needed; however, no comment was made.
- G. Mol remarked that the plan has been in development for some time. He noted that the lake lot was approved during the rezoning process. The concept plan presented is the same as that shown during both the rezoning and the Board of Adjustment reviews.

- H. Bravinder moved to approve a conditional use permit for a 4-lot platted subdivision called The Enclave at Lake Ida, in accord with the discussion, and, plans, terms and specifications submitted by the applicant and completed by Otto Associates dated 6/12/25 Project No. 24-0166, subject to the following conditions: 1) Prior to recording the final plat the plat checklist must be completed including but not limited to the following: a) Park dedication is paid along with the other fees noted on the plat checklist; b) A title opinion is submitted and accepted by the County Attorney; c) The letter of credit or other surety is established with the Township road and a developer's agreement, in accord with the Township's specifications, is recorded noting that prior to a building permit being issued on any lot the Township will have approved the road as a public road, unless the Township provides written confirmation that road has been completed to the extent the Township will allow building permit issuance; 2) The Commission notes that there are wetland areas and stormwater ponds throughout the plat and that these areas are subject to regulations and controls and cannot be altered without the proper permits through the Wright County SWCD and the Planning and Zoning Office; 3) Driveway approaches onto the Township roads must be approved by the Township prior to the issuance of a building permit; 4) Building locations shall generally comply with the plans submitted (sheet 1), minor changes may be allowed if all building and septic system requirements are met. Any building or development proposed for any lot must include plans to show the preservation of proper surface drainage and both a primary and secondary sewage treatment site. The Zoning Administrator may require any significant change of the building location or land alteration on any lot to be reviewed by the Planning Commission as an amendment to the plat; 5) All lot line adjustments previously approved by the Board of Adjustment must be fully executed and transferred prior to recording of the final plat. Motion seconded by Felger.

VOTE: Mol, Holland, Bravinder & Felger

ABSTAINED: Greninger

MOTION PASSED

4. **REMLE HOLDINGS LLC** – New

LOCATION: 9423 DARROW AVE SE – Part of GOVERNMENT LOT 2 in Section 22, Township 118, Range 25, Wright County, MN. (Franklin Twp.) Tax #208-200-222401. Property Owner: REMLE HOLDINGS LLC

Petitions for an Interim Use Permit for a riding academy with equine-assisted services, as regulated in Sections 155.003(121), 155.031 & 155.048, Title XV, Land Usage of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Caryn Brakenridge (Conscious Counseling Solutions, LLC & Conscious Cornerstones, LLC) and Andy Elmer (Remle Holdings LLC)

- A. Rhineberger displayed the site plan while reviewing the request. The property is a 10-acre parcel located in Franklin Township, zoned General Agriculture (AG) and designated as Agricultural in the Land Use Plan. The request is for an Interim Use Permit (IUP) to operate a horse-based therapy and wellness program, classified under the County ordinance as a riding academy. However, the proposed use differs from a traditional equestrian facility. Instead of offering riding lessons or competitive training, the operation will focus on equine-assisted learning, therapy, and wellness experiences. These services involve ground-based interactions with horses, without actual horseback riding. The operation will utilize several existing structures, including the “warming house,” which is to be renovated for use as an office and client space, the first floor of the barn, and designated pastures. Discussion regarding building code requirements has already occurred with the Building Official. Additional details were outlined in the applicant’s narrative and shown on the site plan, both of which were included in the staff report. The applicant is scheduled to meet with Franklin Township on August 4th, and no formal response has yet been received from the Township. No other public comments have been submitted at this time.
- B. No comments were received from the public or the applicant during the meeting.
- C. Mol stated that the Commission typically prefers to receive input from the Townships before moving forward with a decision. In this case, it may be appropriate to conduct a site inspection and continue the item to a future meeting, allowing time for the Township meeting to take place.
- D. Greninger asked whether the facility had been previously used for equine therapy. Brakenridge responded that she does not believe it had. Rhineberger noted that while the barn appears to be in good condition, it has not been used recently. However, there is evidence that animals have occupied other buildings and areas of the property in the recent past. Brakenridge added that both their equine specialist and a structural engineer had reviewed the property.
- E. Bravinder asked who currently resides at the property. Brakenridge confirmed that she and Andy (Elmer) would be the tenants of the home.
- F. Holland moved to continue the matter to the August 21, 2025, meeting for Township review and comment along with a site inspection. Motion seconded by Greninger.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. **CHRISTOPHER RASSET** – New

LOCATION: 7254 DEMPSEY AVE NW – Part of the NW 1/4 of the SW 1/4 in Section 27, Township 121, Range 26, Wright County, MN. (Maple Lake Twp.) Tax #210-100-273202. Property Owner: CHRISTOPHER G & VICKI L RASSET

Petitions for an Interim Use Permit for a commercial agricultural tourism use for a winery operation that includes a vineyard, bottle sales, and a tasting room, as regulated in Sections 155.003(25), 155.031, 155.048 & 155.109 of Title XV, Land Usage of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

Present: Chris and Vicki Rasset

- A. Rhineberger presented details about the property and the request as he conducted his review. The property is a roughly 10-acre parcel located along Dempsey Avenue NW in Maple Lake Township. It is zoned General Agriculture (AG) and is designated as Agricultural in the Northwest Quadrant (NWQ) Land Use Plan. In 2001, the property was created as a 9.7-acre parcel through a Board of Adjustment hearing, which approved a lot line adjustment. In November 2022, the Board of Adjustment approved another lot line adjustment to add 0.3 acres from PID 210-100-273330 to this property, bringing the total to 10 acres, which is the minimum acreage required for a Commercial Agricultural Tourism use. This request is for an Interim Use Permit (IUP) for a commercial agricultural tourism use associated with a winery operation. The proposal includes a vineyard, bottle sales, and a seasonal tasting room. A new 3,072-square-foot (64' x 48') commercial building is also proposed as part of the operation. Initially, the tasting room will not be completed until wine production begins. Wine production is expected to start at 500–650 cases annually, with projected growth to 1,500–2,000 cases per year. The full business plan, building plans, and site plan were included in the staff report. Maple Lake Township has recommended approval of the request. Four comments from neighbors were received, expressing concerns about the proposed use. All comments have been included in the staff report packet.
- B. C. Rasset noted that the proposed site plan does not include an additional holding tank for wastewater related to winery production. Rhineberger responded that such a tank is a requirement of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Department of Agriculture. C. Rasset acknowledged that there is significant concern regarding noise and traffic. He explained that the primary sales strategy is to place the product on as many retail shelves as possible. The tasting room is not expected to be built out for the first few years, until the production process is finalized and sales performance is better understood. He added that the tasting room is relatively small, with no space for large events, and there are no plans to host weddings. Mol confirmed that there would be no weddings or graduation parties and asked whether the facility would operate by appointment or during set hours. C. Rasset stated it would be open during set hours: Friday evenings and Saturdays. Mol also inquired about music, which C. Rasset confirmed would not be part of the experience. He clarified that the focus is strictly on wine tasting, with no plans to serve food.
- C. Public comment: Mol asked members of the public to state their name and address and to keep their comments to five minutes or less.
- Gerald Giebenhain, 7480 Dempsey Ave NW, stated that he lives directly north of the proposed site. He expressed confusion about the process, noting that the Maple Lake Township Board typically meets on the third Tuesday of each month. He questioned how the

- township could have submitted a formal response to the request when their meeting minutes would not have been approved until the following month, thus rendering them unofficial. Giebenhain requested that Rhineberger display an aerial photo of Dempsey Avenue while he described the surrounding area. He explained that Dempsey Avenue is a 1.4-mile, township-maintained gravel road with 15 residences. It features a blind entrance from County Road 106 and another entrance from County Road 37. He assumed a site inspection would be conducted and strongly recommended reviewing each entrance, with particular attention to traffic safety and existing driving hazards along the road. He emphasized that the request should be evaluated in terms of increased traffic and related safety concerns. To support ongoing winery operations, a significant number of patrons would be required to visit the property, which raises concerns among neighbors. Giebenhain stressed that traffic is the primary concern shared by himself and many other residents. He also noted that, unlike the Planning & Zoning process, the Township had not notified area property owners about the hearing. As a result, many neighbors were unaware of the proposal. While acknowledging that the town board is relatively new, he believes the Township should have done more to inform residents. Giebenhain submitted a letter signed by 9 of the 12 property owners along the road (excluding 3 members of the Rasset family), voicing opposition to the request. He read the letter aloud and submitted a copy to Rhineberger for the record. The letter outlined several key concerns: increase in traffic and safety, alcohol related risks, noise and event disruption, incompatibility with rural residential character and community opposition. Bravinder asked whether Giebenhain opposed the agricultural nature of the business itself. Giebenhain responded that he did not; the property has been used to grow grapes, which are currently being sold to another winery for production. However, according to the business plan, a large portion of the grapes required for their own wine production would need to be imported. Bravinder noted that this is fairly typical for small-scale wineries. Giebenhain reiterated that traffic remains the core concern. Longtime residents are familiar with the road's blind spots and hazard areas, but visitors unfamiliar with the terrain could increase the risk of accidents.
- Jen Rasset, 7250 Dempsey Ave NW, who lives directly east of the property in question, stated that she and her husband have a close relationship with the applicants and are aware that opening a winery has long been their dream. She noted that she had already submitted a detailed written response to the Commission, which is part of the public record, but wanted to highlight several key points during her public comment. J. Rasset explained that in 2022, she and her husband were approached by Chris and Vicki Rasset regarding their winery plans. At that time, they agreed to sell 0.3 acres to help the applicants meet the 10-acre minimum required for the proposed use. During those early conversations, the plan included a much smaller shed located in a different part of the property. While she believes that the winery will be well cared for and could be successful, she expressed concern about the changes in the project plans and the lack of communication since their initial discussions. These factors have created some distrust, and she emphasized the importance of ensuring that her and her husband's interests are protected moving forward. J. Rasset reviewed some of the key concerns outlined in her written submission, including: Installation of a culvert on the proposed access road to prevent drainage or runoff issues that could negatively impact neighboring properties; the entrance to the winery crossing their property with the associated liability and maintenance responsibility; adequate screening between the properties to address view as well as trespassing; proper disposal of waste from the winemaking process; the potential for special events and extended hours of operation; impacts to their own future plans and enjoyment of their property as they have discussed reintroducing cattle to their property and do partake in riding of ATV's and hunting; the general need for neighborly

- communication and cooperation. In closing, J. Rasset reiterated that while she respects the dream Chris and Vicki (Rasset) are pursuing, the proposal now being considered is significantly different from what was discussed in 2022, and the resulting impacts on neighboring properties are more substantial. Ideally, she would like to see the Commission directly address some of their concerns in writing if the request is approved.
- Greg Rosine, 7268 Dempsey Ave NW, stated that he owns the property directly to the west of the proposed winery site. The proposed access road to the winery runs along his property for approximately 600 feet, and his house is located about 130 feet from that driveway, facing directly toward it. Rosine expressed concerns about increased noise and traffic, particularly the dust that will be generated by vehicles on the gravel road and driveway. He emphasized the need for effective dust control measures and a road maintenance agreement. He noted that many of his additional comments were already included in a letter submitted for the staff report or echoed by previous speakers. He explained that when he purchased his property in 2001, both his and the Rasset property were 9.7 acres, and the adjacent driveway did not raise concerns at that time, as the area was residential in nature. He also expressed no objection to the Rasset parcel being increased to 10 acres to support agricultural use. However, he was not aware that a commercial business would eventually be introduced as part of that change. Rosine's primary concern is the significant increase in traffic that would pass in front of his home and along the proposed driveway.
 - Tim Patton, 7221 Dempsey Ave NW, stated that he echoes many of the concerns already expressed by others, with the primary issue being the anticipated increase in traffic. He noted that there are many young children living along Dempsey Avenue, and they frequently ride their bikes on the road. With 15 homes currently located along the gravel road, he believes that adding traffic for a business will have a significant impact on safety and quality of life. Patton acknowledged that while the current proposal limits the number of patrons, as a business owner himself, he understands the financial pressures that come with running a business. His concern is what mechanisms, if any, will be in place to prevent unchecked growth beyond what is currently proposed.
 - Briana Pawelk, 7037 Dempsey Ave NW, stated that she lives less than a quarter-mile from the property in question. Her three young children often play in the front yard, which is roadside and approximately 77 feet from the road. Therefore, she is concerned about the increase in traffic, much of which will pass directly by her home. Pawelk emphasized that she and many residents along Dempsey Avenue are business owners themselves, including some with agricultural enterprises, so they are not opposed to business in general. However, she is opposed to the winery proposal, with her full concerns detailed in a submitted letter. She stated that the winery will increase traffic on a road that is not designed to accommodate such volumes, raising safety concerns for local residents. The increase in traffic is expected primarily on Friday evenings and Saturdays, when residents are most likely to be home and enjoying their properties. She feels the proposal exceeds the scope of a positive agricultural use and instead resembles a public venue. Pawelk also raised concerns about an active short-term campground, operated illegally by a relative and adjacent to the property, which she believes will directly support the winery business. Mol noted that the campground issue is outside the scope of this hearing, but Pawelk maintained that it remains a concern. She urged the Commission to deny the permit. However, if the permit is approved, she requested clear limits on operating hours, event size, dust control, road maintenance responsibilities, enforcement guarantees, and defined expiration dates for the permit. Pawelk asked whether

agricultural tourism is necessary to operate a winery, grow grapes, and sell wine, or if it applies specifically to on-site activities such as the tasting room and wine sales. Rhineberger clarified that agricultural tourism refers specifically to inviting the public onto the property. Pawelk concluded that it would be possible to operate a winery and produce wine while holding events off-site.

- D. C. Rasset acknowledged that the neighbors' concerns about traffic are valid. From their perspective, many other wineries operate on gravel roads. They have spoken with Buffalo Rock Winery in Rockford, which is located in an even more residential area than theirs. They noted that it is common for winery websites to remind visitors to be mindful of neighbors, and they plan to use their social media platforms to address any road-related concerns. C. Rasset emphasized that this type of customer visitation is exactly what Agricultural Tourism entails, allowing customers to visit the site where grapes are grown and learn how they are turned into wine. Regarding the building location concern raised by Jen (Rasset), C. Rasset explained that the building site was changed after consulting with Bernie Miller, the septic system designer. The original location did not have sufficient space for the building, well, and septic system, and connecting to the existing septic system was not doable. The proposed new location is the best option for the winery.
- E. Rhineberger addressed several questions and concerns, particularly those raised by Mrs. Rasset (Jen Rasset). One question involved the allotment of cattle and how the winery might affect that. Rhineberger explained that feedlot setbacks apply only to dwellings and do not reference other types of buildings on the property. Since the winery is an Interim Use Permit (IUP), the dwelling remains the primary structure on the property, so feedlot setbacks would be measured from the dwelling. He also noted that setbacks related to private wells could impact where animals might be located, depending on factors such as fencing and dirt lots, but these are highly site-specific. Regarding hunting concerns, Rhineberger stated that these fall under Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) regulations, which the county does not control or have oversight of. Such matters would need to be addressed with the local conservation officer. On the issue of culvert installation and sizing, Rhineberger advised that this should be coordinated with the Wright County Soil and Water District (SWCD) or the local drainage authority. C. Rasset added that he spoke with the contractor who installed the culvert for Jen (Rasset) and plans are to install a similar-sized culvert for the winery. Bravinder asked about the culvert location. Rhineberger displayed an aerial map from Beacon and reviewed the location. Bravinder commented that he is familiar with culverts and recommended that anything under 15 inches should not be installed, emphasizing that the culvert should be steel rather than plastic. C. Rasset believes the plan calls for a 30-inch culvert. Bravinder inquired whether this is a pre-ordinance driveway and how it became a shared access. Rhineberger replied that he was unsure but explained that shared accesses are not prohibited and are typically located along a common property line with an ingress/egress easement over a shared span before branching to individual properties. Bravinder expressed curiosity about whether the shared access was established in the typical manner used today, as it does not appear to follow the usual pattern. He recommended that the Commission conduct a site inspection but wanted to hear additional comments, if there were any.
- F. Greninger questioned how the property was accessed prior to the added acreage. C. Rasset explained they had their driveway prior to the house behind them being built. V. Rasset explained they purchased the land from her in-laws, who at the time owned the adjacent land and when the driveway was installed for their home it was a non-issue. Their driveway has always been in this location.
- G. Bravinder moved to continue the matter to the August 21, 2025, meeting to allow time for a site inspection and allow the Township to respond. Motion seconded by Greninger.

DISCUSSION: Rhineberger noted that the Township has already provided its response. Mol expressed the opinion that if the Township wished to reconsider or further discuss the matter, they should have attended the meeting tonight. He stated that the applicant has fulfilled the requirement to meet with the Township and that it is not customary to ask the applicant to return to the Township after this step.

Mol further commented that if the Township desires to provide additional input, they are welcome to attend the Commission's August meeting. Holland confirmed that the Township is invited to participate in the upcoming site inspection. Mol added that the Township is notified of the site inspection, and it is their choice whether to attend

Bravinder and Greninger agreed to strike the Township response portion of the motion.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

6. **BRUCE L SCHUT** – New

LOCATION: 7414 Baker Ave NW – Part of SW1/4 OF NW 1/4 & N1/2 OF SW1/4 and N1/2 OF SE1/4 & SW1/4 OF SE1/4 EX TR DES DOC 1567446 (264100) in Sections 25 & 26, Township 121, Range 26, Wright County, MN. (Maple Lake Twp.) Tax #210-100-253200 & 210-100-264200. Property Owner: BRUCE L SCHUT

Petitions for a Conditional Use Permit for a two-lot unplatted residential subdivision, as regulated in Sections 155.029 & 155.047, Title XV, Land Usage of the Wright County Code of Ordinances.

No representative present.

- A. Rhineberger noted that the item was incorrectly noticed in regard to the number of lots being proposed. Due to the significant discrepancy between the number of lots listed in the public notice and the actual request, staff discussed the issue with the applicant. The applicant has requested that the item be continued to the August 21st hearing to allow time for proper renotification. If the continuation is approved, staff will re-notice the item to neighboring property owners and publish the corrected notice in the newspaper.
- B. Greninger moved to continue the matter to the August 21st meeting to allow time for revised notices to be sent. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. **THE WRIGHT ORDINANCE CHAPTER 155 ZONING** – New

The Wright County Planning Commission will be reviewing and discussing proposed amendments to the Wright County Code of Ordinances. Proposed amendments will be related to residential backyard chickens, antennas and support structures as conditional use permits, removing reference to “soils of statewide importance”, and the definition of dynamic signs. The amendment has been assigned number 25-3.

- A. Rhineberger explained that there are several proposed changes, but the primary purpose of this amendment is to allow more options for backyard chickens within Wright County’s jurisdiction. The chicken-related amendment would reduce the minimum lot size for keeping chickens from 2.5 acres to 20,000 square feet in the Urban/Rural Transition (R-1) and Wild and Scenic River (WS) zoning districts, with specific performance standards and limitations. Currently, feedlots are defined by state rules and local ordinance as any structure that houses animals considered livestock. State regulations require a setback of 100 feet between any feedlot or animal structure and a domestic well, which is defined as any private well in the county. Cities such as Buffalo or St. Paul allow chickens on much smaller lots, but these areas are served by public water supply systems, unlike private wells in the county. There is less risk of water contamination in city lots compared to township lots. While this ordinance change would expand the number of eligible parcels for chickens, not all parcels will qualify due to the included standards. Another proposed amendment is to allow signs with digitally changing faces, provided they do not change more than once per calendar day. Currently, if a sign changes electronically rather than physically, it is prohibited. Staff believes it is reasonable to allow digital updates to sign faces from a computer, as long as the content does not scroll, flash, or change more than once per day. The rationale is that in cities, where speed limits are typically 30–40 mph, dynamic signs are less of a distraction. In contrast, in townships and along county roads the speed limits can exceed 55 mph and frequently changing digital signs could be distracting. This amendment would allow the use of modern sign technology while maintaining safety standards. Another change would add “farm equipment sales” as an interim use permit (IUP) in the General Agriculture (AG) district. This use was previously allowed under a conditional use permit (CUP) but was inadvertently omitted when IUPs were introduced in 2024. An additional amendment involves removing “farmland of statewide importance” from the limitation on entitlement divisions in the AG district. When the Land Use Plan was revised in 2007, 2009, and 2011, references to “farmland of statewide importance” were removed, and this amendment seeks to align the AG district standards accordingly. Staff typically evaluates “prime farm soils,” and “farmland of statewide importance” is considered less relevant and is not used in current planning decisions. The final amendment concerns a reclassification of “personal wireless service and microwave antennas” in the Antenna and Support Structure performance standards. The proposal is to revert from allowing these uses under an IUP back to a CUP. Rhineberger has been working with a cellular company and noted that these towers often change ownership. Given the long-term nature of these towers, the CUP process is more appropriate than an IUP, which is intended for more temporary or interim uses.
- B. Holland stated that within the Revisors Group, two commissioners reviewed the proposed amendments under the direction of Administrator Kryzer. Although the "chicken bill" did not pass in the recent legislative session, there is hope that Senator Hoffman, who supports the changes at the state level, will help reintroduce the bill in next year's legislative session. Currently, many people move to Wright County with a few acres of land and assume they are allowed to keep chickens, leading to push back from residents in township areas. The Commissioners have been receiving significant feedback as a result. The intent of this proposed ordinance is to serve as a temporary solution that addresses current concerns while the county continues working toward legislative changes.

C. Public comment.

- Nancy Norsby, a member of the Rockford Township Board, stated that she compared the proposed ordinance with the Land Use Plan map. One area that stood out to her was a specific stretch along County Road 32 near Highway 55, which is designated as “Transitional.” At that location, there is an existing farm site with animals. Based on her reading of the proposed language, it appears the property would not be allowed to have more than 12 chickens, which, she noted, does not make sense. She questioned how someone could be permitted to have horses but not chickens. Norsby stated that she does not have a general issue with the proposed language but suggested it might be helpful to include a sliding scale or threshold standard for the number of chickens allowed based on acreage. In response, Rhineberger used Beacon to display the parcels in question. He explained that none of the properties in the area she referenced would actually be affected by the proposed ordinance. He clarified that the Land Use Plan is not referenced in the zoning ordinance when it comes to livestock restrictions. Norsby then asked whether there are any lots in the R-1 or WS zoning districts that are between 4 and 6 acres, or if most are between ½ and 1 acre. Rhineberger responded that there are other provisions that allow chickens on larger lots, and this ordinance would not prohibit a greater number of chickens in such cases. Norsby acknowledged the explanation and emphasized that her intent was simply to ensure that residents with larger parcels would not be unfairly restricted.
- Crystal Seagraves, of 17032 County Road 75, stated that she lives in the WS (Wild and Scenic River) district on 1.7 acres and just moved to the area in October. She and her family came from the City of Annandale, where, theoretically, they could have had chickens. In May, she called the Planning & Zoning Department to review restrictions and was surprised to learn that chickens were not allowed on her property. She explained that her property is far from the river and that her nearby neighbors are allowed to have chickens. A Beacon aerial map was displayed, showing the zoning districts in the area for context and review. Seagraves said she appreciates that efforts are being made to create more accommodating rules for situations like hers, as the current ordinance doesn't make sense in all cases. She reiterated her support for the proposed accommodation, at least until state regulations can be updated. Holland acknowledged that the current rules do not always make practical sense but noted that it remains a challenge due to the involvement of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). She added that the County will continue working through the legislative process.
- Tom Lampi, of Lampi Auctioneers in Annandale, addressed the proposed sign changes. He stated that over the past 32 years at his current site, he has spoken with Planning & Zoning multiple times. He is now at the point where he wants to install a sign that clearly communicates when auctions will occur, which is typically every two weeks and include on that sign what is being sold, the time, and the date. Lampi noted that they frequently have people stop by asking why auctions are no longer being posted. He no longer uses a manual letter sign and feels it is outdated not to be allowed a digital sign. He expressed confusion about the proposed limitation of only being able to change the sign once per day. His concern is that with a standard-sized sign, he may not be able to display all the necessary information

- on a single screen, making multiple slides or message transitions necessary. He pointed out that there are other digital signs, outside city limits, that change messages every 7 seconds. While he understands that rapidly changing messages could be distracting at speeds of 55 mph, he suggested a compromise where messages could change every 10–15 seconds instead. Using Beacon, Lampi showed the location of his property and auction site and emphasized that his sign would not impact anyone except passing motorists. Commissioner Mol asked if Lampi was requesting to change the digital sign more than once per day, to which Lampi confirmed he was. Lampi added that he understands the limitations on sign size and is willing to work within those constraints.
- D. Bravinder questioned Commissioner Holland about the reasoning behind the restriction that a digital sign may not change more than once in a calendar day. Holland responded that the concern is primarily related to safety. When a sign changes, it can draw a driver's attention away from the road, particularly at higher speeds, which presents a potential distraction hazard. Bravinder acknowledged that changing a sign every 7 seconds could indeed be distracting. However, he expressed confusion about the once-per-day limit, stating that it seems excessive and unclear. He noted that Mr. Lampi had explained that he would not be able to fit the entire message on a single screen and therefore would need the ability to cycle through multiple screens to convey the full information. A broader discussion followed among the group regarding what constitutes a "single message" on a digital sign, how message changes would be defined and managed, and the frequency at which they could occur under the current language of the proposed amendment. However, no clear consensus or direction emerged from the discussion.
- E. Felger stated that there is a digital sign within the City of Buffalo that he frequently drives past, and he finds it difficult to read the entire message in one pass without becoming distracted. He expressed concern that drivers are already easily distracted, and for that reason, he supports the ordinance as written. Felger emphasized that he believes this is a genuine safety issue. He added that, in his view, any change to a sign's content, even if it's part of the same message or event, should be considered a separate change.
- F. Holland recalled a digital sign in St. Michael located near a stoplight, where drivers have the opportunity to view the message change while stopped. She noted that this is very different from viewing a sign while traveling at 60 mph, where reading changing content becomes more difficult and potentially unsafe. Holland suggested that a digital sign could simply display a website address where viewers could find more detailed information. She expressed that she is comfortable with the limitation of allowing only one message change per day.
- G. Mol reminded the Commission that while the testimony came from a single resident operating an auction site, there are also restaurants and other businesses located in rural areas. If the ordinance allowed signs to change every 7 seconds, people might be watching for daily specials or other messages, which raises safety concerns. Mol agreed that frequent sign changes are distracting and noted that at speeds of 55 mph on county roads, being distracted for even 7 seconds is significant. He emphasized that safety must be a key consideration when reviewing this ordinance.
- H. Rhineberger stated that the sign ordinance's purpose section outlines several key objectives, including preserving the right to free speech and expression, facilitating clear and pleasant communication between people and their surroundings, and preventing excessive visual clutter and distractions. These distractions can be harmful to traffic and pedestrian safety, property values, business opportunities, and the overall community appearance.

I. Public comment

- Tom Lampi asked whether existing digital signs will be required to conform to the new rules or if they will be allowed to operate as they currently do. Rhineberger replied that there are a few gas stations in the townships with digital gas price displays, which are no longer considered placards. He knows of one or two signs located in jurisdictions outside Wright County Planning & Zoning's authority and recalled another sign that was required to remove its digital display. So, while these signs do exist, not all fall under the County's regulatory authority. Lampi agreed with Rhineberger on the location of some signs and noted that he isn't sure if the signs he is aware of obtained the proper approvals and permits. He added that while some have suggested displaying a website address instead, many customers don't have cell phones or computers to look up information. These customers are used to receiving notices that are posted at local bars or grocery stores. For them, information is received via newspapers, billboards, or signs. Lampi emphasized that he doesn't want a sign flashing every 7 seconds, but he would like to post clear, readable information such as "Farm Auction Coming Soon." Felger asked about the use of past trailer signs. Lampi responded that he has used those, but they require frequent manual updates. He added that trailer signs are not ideal, especially in harsh weather conditions like -20°F, and are not very convenient. Being able to update the sign from inside via computer is a much better option. Felger confirmed that the auction site is not located at a fully controlled intersection, which Lampi confirmed, explaining further that the intersection is dangerous and should have a stoplight or other safety improvements.

- J. Felger moved to close the public hearing to all oral and written comment and recommend approval of Ordinance 25-3 to the Wright County Board of Commissioners. Motion seconded by Holland.

VOTE: Mol, Holland, Felger & Greninger

NAY: Bravinder

MOTION PASSED

SITE INSPECTION

The Commission scheduled a site inspection for Thursday August 7th, with the Commission to meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Government Center.

Meeting adjourned at 9:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Barry J. Rhineberger".

Barry Rhineberger
Planning & Zoning Administrator

BR:sd

cc: Planning Commission
Twp. Clerks