

ENNIS TOWN COMMISSION MEETING

FEBRUARY 11, 2021

7:00 P.M.

ENNIS TOWN HALL

Open Meeting: Mayor Leavitt opened the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Pledge to the Flag

Commission Present: Bancroft, Hardy, Roberts, Schroeder and Ranson (via GoToMeeting) were present.

Minutes: Minutes of the December 10, 2020 meeting were reviewed by the Commission. Hardy made a motion to approve the minutes. Roberts seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Hardy, Roberts and Schroeder voted yes. Bancroft and Ranson abstained as they were not at the meeting. Motion approved.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items: Josh Vujovich spoke to the Commission regarding upcoming projects in the North 40 Subdivision. A copy of his comments is attached to the minutes.

Tudsbury Site Permit Application: This matter was tabled until needed information is received and is said to be forthcoming. This application is on Block 3, North 40 Subdivision and has 13 Work/Live Units proposed.

My Willow, LLC Siter Permit Application: This matter was tabled. There was some discussion on the project and how the Town plans to move forward with this application. This application is on Block 2, North 40 Subdivision and has 12 Units proposed

Street Maintenance District: There was discussion on what in this Ordinance needs to be updated but moving forward was tabled until Director of Public Works, Kelly Elser, returns to be a part of the discussion.

Department Reports: Library: Karen Ketchu submitted a written report to the Commission for review.

Ambulance: There was no Ambulance report.

Police Dept.: John Moore submitted a written report to the Commission for review. There was some discussion on Madison County Sheriff's Dept. per the Town's agreement with them.

Public Works: Dan Dedman submitted a written report to the Commission for review. Dedman answered some questions regarding work that was done on water well #3 and water testing (lead and copper testing will be resampled in June).

Zoning: There was no zoning report. There was some discussion on the possibility having and "On Call" Planner and if it is something the Town should consider.

There was some discussion on the Zoning Administrator job description and duties and what the Town is looking for and wants the Zoning Administrator to do.

Clerk: Ginger Guinn submitted a written report for Commission review.

Mayor Report/Comments: The Commission needs to set a date with Cushing/Terrell to kick off the Master Plan Project. (Thursday, February 18, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m. was chosen as the date for this work session.)

The Mayor stated he spoke with Suzuki's regarding the garage they are planning to build and they have agreed to wait on construction until the proposed Zoning Ordinance is done.

The Mayor spoke the mask mandate and that the Governor has lifted it but Madison County has decided to keep it in effect.

Commission Comments: Roberts read a statement to clear matters of her trying to allegedly disband the Town of Ennis Police Dept. (A copy of her statement is attached to these minutes.)

Bancroft stated a lot of this started due to Robert's statements about her not wanting Officer Moore at the School. He stated he thinks Officer Moore is doing a good job.

Roberts stated her posing questions about law enforcement coverage has nothing to do with Officer Moore's performance at all. The questions she has pertained to discussion from the Budget meetings.

Claims: Bancroft made a motion to pay claims. Schroeder seconded the motion. All Commissioners voted yes. Motion approved.

Adjourn: Bancroft made a motion to adjourn. Roberts seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: All Commissioners voted yes.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Blake Leavitt, Mayor

Ginger Guinn, Clerk/Treasurer

I would like to address the council regarding the pending projects in the North 40 Development. First, I would like to remind everyone that the project was approved for multifamily and mixed-use projects, with parks and open space dedicated at that time. Any additional requirements for more open space are onerous. Parking lots can be made more appealing using median landscaping and good design.

The vision for a live work community was conceived in 2006 at a vastly different economic time. Since then, the demand for commercial land and property has far been outweighed by the demand for housing. The current limiting factor to further economic development is housing, not a lack of commercial property. All these projects will help alleviate that pressure on local businesses. I have had many conversations with business owners and administrators regarding the lack of appropriate housing for their new employees, and that not being able to find housing is the number one reason they cannot expand their business and hire excellent people.

Working from home is becoming the new normal. As more and more people can telecommute, communities like Ennis are going to become increasingly popular. The use of current housing on the VRBO market has had a tremendous impact on the ability of people to find acceptable housing. As Ennis becomes a more popular destination, the quantity of existing housing being turned into vacation rentals will also increase. Many of the units in these projects are designated as long-term rentals, with the builder maintaining control of the property, or creating additional restrictions to ensure the neighborhood stays as they intended using their Unit Ownership Association documents.

The purchasers of these lots are capable of creating excellent projects for the Town of Ennis, even more importantly, they *want* to create great projects. A well-done project will generate more revenue and profit for long term investors. Keeping these areas clean and looking good also increases the appeal and desirability to potential buyers/renters. These projects represent a fantastic opportunity for the Town of Ennis to solve one of the most serious obstacles to financial growth in the community: **Housing**.

These projects will have little impact on the Town's resources, in fact the increased tax revenue will far exceed any small increases. Existing parks are already maintained by the Town, as is Otis Avenue and Laura Lane, the primary driving access for these properties. There will be increased water and sewer use, but again, these will be offset by the increase in usage fees.

My best guess for the construction costs alone on these projects is \$15,000,000. This does not take any market conditions or retail value into consideration. The increase in tax revenue to the Town of Ennis from these projects would be approximately \$47,000 per year at full build out.

In conclusion, I encourage you to work with these developers and find a way to encourage all of these projects to move forward. People are coming to Ennis and the Madison Valley, and it is better to have excellent housing in town and reduce sprawl and let everyone benefit from working together. Thank you.

Mr. Mayor, Fellow Town Commissioners, Friends and Neighbors: I want to make this statement to clear up some serious misunderstandings that have surfaced in the muddy waters of social media.

Recently a letter was circulated falsely accusing me of “single-handedly trying to disband and replace the Ennis Police Department.”

Nothing could be farther from my mind. Ennis is my home. It has been since 2006. It is where my husband and I chose to raise our family. I feel, as I believe many of you do, that law enforcement coverage for our growing community should be increased, not reduced.

The Town Commission addresses matters that concern the Town and the future of our Town at public meetings. We share ideas and receive public input at these regular meetings. Issues must be placed on the Agenda before they can be addressed.

Law enforcement duties in our town are shared with our Police Department and the Deputies of the Madison County Sheriff’s Department. I have asked the mayor to put on the agenda for a meeting to consider an evaluation of how our growing law enforcement needs can be best met in the future. There was nothing secret or “back-door” about this request. It is how we Commissioners govern (or try to) in an orderly manner.

I realize that we all have a lot on our plates with the COVID 19 pandemic. This may not be the time to make any changes. However, good government requires foresight. We should be proactive, not reactive. The purpose of my request was to gather facts and information so we can plan for our community’s future.

I have never been a “politician.” I tend to be idealistic about the charge of public service. My single goal as a Town Commissioner is to always serve the best interest of our wonderful little town. I thank all of you for the opportunity to do so.