

**MINUTES OF THE
LEE COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

Regular Meeting

Thursday, January 2, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

**County Board Room
Old Lee County Courthouse, Dixon, Illinois**

Board Members

Bruce Forster, Chair
Craig Buhrow, Vice Chair
Mike Pratt, Member
Gene Bothe, Member
Glen Hughes, Member
Rex Meyer, Alternate Member

Staff

Dee Duffy, Zoning Officer
Alice Henkel, Clerk

At 7:00 p.m., Chair Bruce Forster called the meeting to order and asked the Clerk to call the roll:

Members present: Forster, Buhrow, Pratt, Bothe, Meyer
Members absent: Hughes

The first order of business was approval of the minutes for the December 5, 2019, meeting. Gene Bothe made a motion to approve the minutes. A second was discerned, and there was no debate. A vote was taken, and the ayes prevailed. The motion passed.

The next order of business was a motion to adjourn pursuant to County Board's approval of petition(s). There were no petitions to adjourn.

Under old business was the continued discussion regarding the update on tracking changes to parcels with new software, which led into the continued discussion regarding pursuing owners with changes to their parcel, particularly those who have not obtained a building permit and/or are noncompliant with the County's setbacks, flood plains, zoning, etc. Penalties without required permits/zoning were also discussed.

The Board decided that the Zoning Office would proceed to address noncompliant parcel changes by sending a letter by regular mail to the property owner informing them of the issue and giving them an amnesty period to rectify the issue(s). If the property owner does not comply within the amnesty period, a certified letter will be sent to them, informing them that they are in default and a fine is owed. The County will also inform the public of this process via newspaper, radio station, farm bureau, etc. The Zoning Office will focus on six to seven townships at a time, identifying problematic parcels and contacting the property owners that are in violation. Additionally if a new construction occurs without a building permit and a new owner purchases the property without knowing, the new owner will not be held accountable.

The Board discussed the length of the amnesty period. Once an agreement was reached, Mike Pratt made a motion that there be a 60-day amnesty period, starting March 2020 for the first group of townships to be reviewed and notified. A second was discerned and discussion was held. A vote was taken and all were in favor, resulting in a 5-0 vote.

The next order of new business was a discussion regarding attendance at meetings via phone conference. Following discussion, the Board agreed that the bi-laws should be changed to allow this to happen. Members that appear by phone conference would not be paid for mileage.

The next order of new business was a discussion regarding Illinois' newly adopted cannabis act. If the County Board allows cannabis-related businesses (such as dispensaries, cultivation centers and processing centers) within the county, this Board will have to do an ordinance change. Zoning Administrator Dee Duffy was instructed to look into what other counties are doing and to report her finding back to this Board.

The next order of new business was a discussion regarding administrative hearings. The cities of Sterling and Rock Falls currently hold administrative hearings once a month to handle quasi-criminal and civil matters, such as ordinance violations, on behalf of the municipalities. The city of Dixon is looking to do the same and has asked the County if it would like to be a part of that program. This would provide the County with a system for handling ordinance violations without having to go through the court system. The Board stated that it supports this collaboration with the City. Ms. Duffy told the Board she would talk with other department heads to see what kind of support there is for this system before collectively approaching the County Board.

The last order of new business was discussion regarding the new Lee County website. The County is in the process of getting a new website. A consulting firm was hired to build the new site. They hope to have it up and running by the end of January 2020.

There was no other business.

At 8:36 p.m., Rex Meyer made a motion to adjourn until the next regular meeting of the Zoning Board. A second was discerned, and there was no debate. A vote on the motion was taken, and the ayes prevailed. The motion was adopted, and the meeting was adjourned.