

**Polson Development Code Update
Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
October 2, 2009, 9:00 –11:00 a.m.
Polson City Hall, Commission Chambers**

ATTENDEES

Bruce Agrella, PDC Advisory Committee
Joyce Weaver, PDC Advisory Committee and Polson Building and Planning Department
Cora Pritt, Polson Building and Planning Department
Dave DeGrandpre, Land Solutions, LLC
Sue Shannon, Lake County Planning Department
Todd Crossett, Polson City Manager (for the Affordable/Workforce Housing discussion)

DISCUSSION

Large Scale Commercial Development, Highway Commercial Zoning

- Joyce stated that the Montana Supreme Court upheld Polson’s decision to approve the Super Wal-Mart special use permit and subdivision applications. The committee then discussed whether specific standards should be developed for “box store” or large scale commercial development—not in response to Wal-Mart but in general. Dave stated many communities have tackled this issue and although he wasn’t sure what sorts of guidelines might be appropriate, it seemed that during the Super Wal-Mart hearings architectural and landscape design was a big issue. Dave said he would look into this more.
- Sue mentioned that it seems appropriate to encourage larger scale commercial development to locate in Polson as opposed to out in the county and the committee agreed. Sue said large scale commercial seems to occur in clusters or groups. The committee discussed extending the HCZD to the east along Highway 35 perhaps ½ mile and maybe only on the south side of the highway and wanted to talk with Dennis Duty (who wasn’t able to attend the meeting) about his thoughts on the matter.
- The committee agreed that there needs to be more connectivity between parcels in HCZD—for example the unfortunate situation of having to get onto Highway 35 to get between Wal-Mart and Safeway. Sue suggested requiring connectivity when possible, perhaps only easements, between new or expanded land uses in HCZD to allow for future movement between stores off of the major highways.

Affordable/Workforce Housing

- Todd Crossett said he had contacts from Sun Valley, Idaho with information on good affordable housing programs. One of the ways to help address affordable housing is with a land trust owning the land under which homes are built so when they are purchased, the buyer obtains the structure but not the land, resulting in lower prices.
- Joyce said that often working people get left out of affordable housing discussions and there must be an emphasis on workforce housing as well.
- Todd mentioned that it is important to integrate or diversify neighborhoods to prevent ghettos from developing.
- Dave brought up some of the currently proposed affordable housing ideas such as waiving or reducing review fees and impact fees for qualified projects, allowing for accessory dwelling units in some areas, allowing increased building heights in the CBD, allowing dwelling units in the CBD (but not along Main, 1st St. West or 1st St. East, as per the 9/14/09 discussion), etc. Dave brought up the idea of decreasing the minimum lot size for homes in MRZD but the committee said 7,000 square foot lots was already pretty tight for detached residences. Dave also said there is a lot of vacant and apparently developable land either already zoned MRZD or adjacent to MRZD that can be developed with multi-family units. Cora pointed out that some of the vacant land near the sewage lagoons has high groundwater.
- There was discussion about a larger affordable/workforce housing program to look at the issue from a more comprehensive perspective (more than what changes to the Polson Development Code can accomplish) and Todd said he would get Dave information on some of his contacts. The committee discussed possibly partnering with people from Salish Kootenai College, the Polson business community and the Lake County Community Development Corporation.

Highway 93 Bypass

- Sue suggested placing a depiction of one or more potential Highway 93 bypass routes on the Zoning District Map in order to let developers and others know a bypass could be developed so that intensive development does not occur in the bypass route. Sue—as well as the other attendees—thought a bypass would be positive for Polson. Sue said it would cost taxpayers unnecessary money if the Montana Department of Transportation had to buy out development that could be prevented or limited by re-zoning during the PDC update.
- The committee discussed what they knew about the 1993 EIS, approval of the bypass by the Tribal Council and City Council, and effort to revive the project

around 2003. Dave said a depiction of two potential bypass routes is located in the 1993 Polson Master Plan.

- Joyce said a recent meeting occurred that she did not attend with the Montana Department of Transportation and others in order to raise this issue again. Joyce did not have a report from the meeting to share with the committee but would look into it.
- Dave said he did not feel comfortable or qualified to put realistic bypass routes on the zoning map. Although there are a couple of routes that were studied in 1993, there are many location specific issues such as slopes, soils, groundwater, cultural sites, land ownership, etc. that would have to be re-evaluated to know with any certainty where a realistic route would go, so to put potential routes on a zoning map would be premature. He said the map is a regulatory document that directly impacts specific landowners and properties while the bypass is only speculative at this time—despite the history and it being a good idea. Dave said it would be more appropriate to amend the growth policy first, then change the zoning to protect downtown business owners.
- Sue said maybe at this point what we can do is limit the density of development in the CIZD where a northern bypass route may connect with Highway 93.

Hillside Development and Stormwater Management

- Sue said it is necessary to provide better definition and clarity to the PDC regarding slopes. Ideas like how a slope is to be measured (an average across the whole lot or only the building site) are important to clarify. Sue said her office is interested in knowing where areas over 25% are located and wants those areas calculated on a square-foot basis. She indicated she is not especially concerned with slope across an entire lot if there is clearly a mild building site. Sue mentioned the idea of requiring larger lot sizes on steeper slopes.
- Dave said he has started looking into hillside development standards but did not yet have recommendations.
- The committee discussed the importance of ensuring the approved stormwater management plans are implemented through inspections. The discussion then turned to the lack of enforcement for those properties where approved plans are not followed.

Polson Development Code Area Boundaries

- The committee discussed extending the PDC boundary to the east along Highway 35 and potentially to the south along Highway 93. Sue said these areas have seen the most development and are probably the most likely for future growth.

- Sue suggested requiring community sewer and water services in new developments instead of individual wells and septics in the county-portion of the PDC area so the developments can be readily connected to municipal systems when they are extended.
- The committee decided to discuss potential boundary changes at its next meeting.

The committee plans to continue this discussion on October 20th from 9-11 in the Polson City Commission Chambers.