

TUESDAY, JUNE 24, 2008

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING HELD**

**STATE OF MINNESOTA)
DODGE COUNTY)**

**COUNTY ADMINISTRATION OFFICE
MANTORVILLE, MN**

2008-10 C.O.W.

The Dodge County Commissioners met in Committee of the Whole June 24, 2008, in the Commissioner's Room at the Dodge County Courthouse Annex, Mantorville, MN, at 9:00 a.m. CDT. Klaus Alberts opened the meeting at 9:02 a.m. CDT.

Meeting Convened

The Chair acknowledged those present:

Those Present

Members present: Klaus Alberts District #1
Lyle Tjosaas District #2
David Erickson District #3
Don Gray District #4
David Hanson District #5

Members absent: None

Also present: David McKnight County Administrator
Becky Lubahn Deputy County Clerk
Duane Johnson Planning Director

Planning Director Duane Johnson met with the Board to discuss a Welsh Equipment/Con-Tech Manufacturing sign issue.

Welsh Equipment/
Con-Tech
Manufacturing Sign
Issue Discussion

Mr. Johnson informed the Board that recently the county was informed by Dan Welsh that MnDOT removed a directional sign from the State Highway 56 right-of-way. This was an important sign for truck drivers because it signaled the turn to Welsh Equipment/Con-Tech Manufacturing. Several inquiries and attempts have been made to either have MnDOT replace the sign or issue a permit for a new directional sign on private property, all attempts to this point have failed.

The Planning Director noted that since MnDOT is not willing to respond, he would like to get some direction and discuss this issue with the Board to determine what can be done to resolve this safety issue. Mr. Johnson informed the Board that without the sign for the businesses, large trucks are turning down the wrong roads and driving Ashland Township roads trying to find Welsh Equipment/ Con-Tech Manufacturing.

Mr. Johnson reported that the purpose of the meeting today would be to direct staff to pursue one of three options: 1) rename 670th Street to Welsh Equipment Street for example, 2) rezone a portion of property to commercial so Welsh Equipment could install a new sign (This property is owned by Garwin McNeilus who is willing to allow this new sign on his property). The reason for the zone change is that the state requires these types of signs only be allowed in commercial or industrial zones. The zone change could be construed as a spot zone and the street name change could be contrary to established county policy of not allowing names vs. numbered streets and avenues or 3) the third option is to do nothing. This option is counter to the county's willingness to issue a business subsidy agreement for JOBZ in 2006 for both Welsh Equipment and Con-Tech Manufacturing.

The Board discussed with the Planning Director the possibility of issuing a variance for the sign. Mr. Johnson stated that the state will not allow a sign on a non-commercial parcel.

Welsh Equipment/
Con-Tech
Manufacturing Sign
Issue Discussion -
Continued

Commissioner Alberts wanted to know why the Board was getting involved in this issue.

The Planning Director reported that the Board is getting involved because they may be asked to rename 670th Street which leads to the businesses. Mr. Johnson did not believe this was an option. The Board may also be asked to consider zoning the property to commercial, it is currently zoned ag.

Commissioner Erickson stated that it is a safety issue. Trucks are driving all over Ashland Township looking for Welsh Equipment/Con-Tech Manufacturing.

Mr. Johnson questioned whether or not there is a valid reason to try to place a sign on State Highway 56 to help drivers find the business. The Planning Director did note that drivers missing their turn for the businesses is a safety issue.

Commissioner Erickson reported that he has been in contact with Representative Randy Demmer regarding MnDOT rules on this issue.

Commissioner Alberts stated that he believes this is an issue that needs to be resolved between Dan Welsh and MnDOT.

Commissioner Erickson informed the Board that in talking to Mr. Demmer he found out that they can get a bigger sign posted a quarter mile before 670th Street informing drivers that this road is coming up. It was noted that signs would be placed on both sides of the road. Mr. Erickson wanted to know if Dan Welsh had been informed of this option.

The Planning Director stated that Dan Welsh was informed of this option and did not like it.

The Board discussed the possibility of spot zoning to resolve this issue.

Commissioner Gray noted that he was in favor of spot zoning due to the circumstances.

Commissioner Erickson reported that Ashland Township has their own planning and zoning and questioned if they should be involved in resolving this issue.

Mr. Johnson informed the Board that Ashland Township is silent on this issue but would be involved in the process.

The Planning Director stated that he needs direction from the Board in order to resolve the sign issue.

Commissioner Alberts repeated that he believes this is an issue that needs to be resolved between Dan Welsh and the state.

Commissioner Erickson commented that the issue is whether or not the Board will allow Welsh Equipment/Con-Tech Manufacturing to put up a larger sign.

Commissioner Gray suggested making a strip along State Highway 56 commercial so the signage would be allowed.

Welsh Equipment/
Con-Tech
Manufacturing Sign
Issue Discussion -
Continued

County Administrator David McKnight reminded the Board that taxes would increase with the suggested re-zoning.

Representative Randy Demmer arrived at the meeting at 9:18 a.m. CDT.

Representative
Demmer Arrives

Mr. Demmer informed the Board that he has talked to MnDOT lobbyist Betsy Parker who understands the problem and has been working with Chad Hanson at MnDOT regarding the signage issue. Mr. Hanson is the MnDOT District Six contact person. Representative Demmer discussed the possibility of installing advanced notice street signs which MnDOT can do at their discretion. Mr. Demmer noted that the installation of advanced notice street signs can be done quickly and efficiently in order to provide a temporary fix to this problem. Mr. Demmer also noted that another option would be to rename the street, however, he was not in favor of this option.

Welsh Equipment/
Con-Tech
Manufacturing Sign
Issue Discussion -
Continued

Commissioner Alberts wanted to know if the state would allow a sign that said Welsh Equipment one mile.

It was Mr. Demmer’s belief that the state would not allow this type of signage.

Representative Demmer informed the Board that the signage requirement is re-evaluated every five years and noted that Dan Welsh can appeal the state’s decision to remove the sign and request a variance from the state.

It was the consensus of the Board that the Planning Director should work with Dan Welsh and the state to install advanced notice street signs for 670th Street.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:29 a.m. CST.

Meeting Adjourned

ATTEST:

KLAUS ALBERTS
CHAIR, COUNTY BOARD

BECKY LUBAHN
DEPUTY CLERK

DATED: