

**CITY OF COHASSET  
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES  
305 NW FIRST AVENUE, COHASSET, MINNESOTA  
WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2020 – 6:00 P.M.**

**THIS MEETING WILL BE HELD ELECTRONICALLY VIA ZOOM TELECONFERENCE CALL DUE TO THE COVID-19 STATEWIDE SHELTER-IN-PLACE ORDER AND TO FACILITATE SOCIAL DISTANCING**

1. **Call Meeting to Order:** Co-Chair Steve Otto called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

a. **Voting Members Present:** Josh Casper, Leslie Kleveter, Steve Lavalier, Steve Otto, Lucas Thompson, Gary Wheelock, and Harlow Zeppelin

b. **Absent with Notice:** None

c. **Ex-Officio Members Present:** Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle, & City Council Liaisons Jason Tabaka and Mary Flinck

d. **Others Present:** Howard Christman, and Christopher Thompson

3. **Review and Approve the Agenda**

a. **Additions:** None

b. **Deletions:** None

*A motion was made by Wheelock/Thompson to approve the agenda as presented. Voting in favor: Casper, Kleveter, Lavalier, Otto, Thompson, Wheelock, & Zeppelin; Voting against: None; Absent: None; Motion carried.*

4. **Resident Input:** None

5. **Approve March 4, 2020 PC Minutes:** *A motion was made by Thompson/Otto to approve the March 4, 2020 Planning Commission minutes as written. Voting in favor: Casper, Otto, Lavalier, Thompson, Kleveter, Wheelock, and Zeppelin; Voting against: None; Absent: None; Motion carried.*

6. Public hearing to #1 to act on a variance request by Howard & Betty Christman for a septic tank no closer than 52 feet from the Ordinary High Water Level (OHWL) of Guile Lake (ordinance minimum is 75 feet) for the property located at 39034 County Road 257 and legally described as the East 400 feet of Government Lot 7 lying North of County Road 257, Section 19, Township 55 North, Range 26 West, Itasca County, Minnesota.

Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle summarized the informational packet including a map. Otto called for discussion or questions. Lavalier questioned the location of the existing septic tank and owner Howard Christman explained it was under the patio cement under the deck. The new tank would be closer to the lake and out from under the cement. After discussion, Vice-Chair Steve Otto called three times for anyone in favor of the variance request to come forward. There was no response. Otto called three times for anyone opposed to the variance request to come forward. There was no response.

Tuttle reported that he received a communication from neighbor Glenn Gambill who stated he has no issue with the variance request. Tuttle contacted the DNR and heard nothing back so it is assumed the DNR has no objections.

After further discussion, Otto closed the public portion of the meeting. ***A motion was made by Casper/Wheelock to approve the variance as requested. Voting in favor: Casper, Otto, Lavalier, Thompson, Kleveter, Wheelock, & Zeppelin; Voting against: None; Absent: None; Motion carried.***

1) Are there practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance? “Practical difficulties” means that the property owner’s proposed improvements are reasonable (economic considerations alone shall not constitute practical difficulties),

Steve Lavalier answered yes because the house is so close to the lake and the existing tank and drain field are noncompliant and need to be replaced to sell the property. All other Commissioners agreed.

2) Are the circumstances which justify the variance unique to the property and not created by the applicant?

Lesley Kleveter answered yes because there is no other reasonable location because of the narrowness of the lot and location of the existing structures. All other Commissioners agreed.

3. If granted, will the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Josh Casper answered yes because it is a necessary improvement. All other Commissioners agreed.

4. If granted, will the variance be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance?

Harlow Zeppelin answered yes because the upgrade will improve water quality. All other Commissioners agreed.

5. If granted, will the variance be consistent with the comprehensive plan?

Steve Lavalier answered yes because the environment is a high priority and the variance will improve the current situation. All other Commissioners agreed.

***A voice vote was made on the motion. Voting in favor: Casper, Kleveter, Lavalier, Otto, Thompson, Wheelock, & Zeppelin; Voting against: None; Absent: None; Motion carried.***

7. Public Hearing #2 to act on a variance request by Christopher & Crystal Thompson for a house addition no closer than 52 feet from the centerline of NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street (ordinance minimum is 68 feet) for the property located at 115 NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and legally described as Lot 7, Block 8 less the North 90 feet thereof in the Plat of the First Addition to Cohasset, Section 11, Township 55 North, Range 26 West, Itasca County, Minnesota.

Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle reviewed the informational. The floor was open for questions and discussion. Steve Lavalier asked how the variance would solve the water in the basement from the entryway roof. The 12 foot addition, drain tile, and grading away from the house should alleviate the water problem.

Co-Chair Otto called three times for anyone in favor of the variance request to come forward. There was no response. Otto called three times for anyone opposed to the variance request to come forward. There was no response and the public portion of the hearing was closed. Zoning Officer Greg Tuttle stated he received no other communications.

***After discussion a motion was made by Casper/Kleveter to grant the variance as requested.***

1) Are there practical difficulties in complying with the zoning ordinance? “Practical difficulties” means that the property owner’s proposed improvements are reasonable (economic considerations alone shall not constitute practical difficulties).

Leslie Kleveter answered yes because the road is a dead end road without a lot of traffic and some grading will help with the water issue, and they need additional space. All other Commissioners agreed

2) Are the circumstances which justify the variance unique to the property and not created by the applicant?

Josh Casper answered yes because the south wall of the house with the dining room is already within the road setback. All other Commissioners agreed

3. If granted, will the variance maintain the essential character of the locality?

Harlow Zeppelin answered yes because the addition does not decrease the neighborhood, other properties are also within the road setback, and the house preexisted the road setback. All other Commissioners agreed

4. If granted, will the variance be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance?

Steve Lavalier answered yes because it is on a dead end street and others have similar road setbacks. All other Commissioners agreed

5. If granted, will the variance be consistent with the comprehensive plan?

Lesley Kleveter answered yes because it will add to the value of the area, the house was preexisting, and others in the area in a similar state. All other Commissioners agreed

***A voice vote was made on the motion. Voting in favor: Casper, Kleveter, Lavalier, Otto, Thompson, Wheelock, & Zeppelin; Voting against: None; Absent: None; Motion carried.***

**8. FYI:**

a. **Houseboats:** Tuttle announced the City has found an attorney who is willing to pursue this issue legally.

b. **Comp Plan Update:** The comp plan project is on hold due to COVID-19.

Co-Chair Steve Otto adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

Submitted by Deputy Clerk Karen Blair

Approved: 7/1/2020