

Town formalizes land-use changes

Written by MARK JAEGER

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Board backs ordinance that confirms amendments to 2035 land-use plan

There was a certain sense of déjà vu Tuesday, when the Saukville Town Board approved a series of modifications to its 2035 comprehensive land-use plan.

The changes reflected amendments already endorsed by the board, but never converted it into ordinance form as required by the county. It is the county that is overseeing the creation of a comprehensive land-use plan in conjunction with the state requirements that each community have a Smart Growth plan in place.

Among the modifications made to the town's previously adopted 2035 plan are the elimination of 500-foot buffer zones around environmentally sensitive lands; the dropping of the terms "countryside estate," "closed subdivisions" and "spot zoning;" and the reduction of minimum residential lots sized to five acres in A-1, A-2, A-3 and A-4 zoning areas.

To complete the formal adoption process of the changes, the board held a public hearing which drew a mixed bag of reactions.

The only critical comments were voiced by naturalist and educator Kate Redmond of Knollwood Drive, who previously challenged the nuances of the more permissive standards being endorsed by the town.

"We moved out to the Town of Saukville in 1977 because of the rural atmosphere, and I am a little concerned about the direction these changes in the land-use plan are going," Redmond said.

"Of course, change will always come, but we should be leading the process and not let the process lead us."

Although the town has a long history of allowing five-acre lots, Redmond feared that by spelling out the provision in the land-use plan there will be a presumed right to such smaller home sites.

"Once you approve a number of five-acre lots, it will be difficult to deny any reasonable request. If you do, you will probably be sued. I am afraid you will find there is no off switch," she said.

Most comments at the hearing, however, supported formalizing the plan changes.

Even Tom Ravn, a member of the Plan Commission who voted against a resolution backing the changes based on some wording concerns, said he supported the ordinance.

"I too like the rural atmosphere here, and I am convinced the intention is to maintain that," Ravn said.

For those concerned that smaller lots will become the rule once the ordinance is in place, Town Chairman Barb Jobs said land divisions still face a three-step approval process before the Plan

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Commission.

“This is not something we will be allowing willy-nilly. Our intention is to allow some growth in the Town of Saukville, but we want that to come as much as possible on land that is not in agriculture,” Jobs said.

The board unanimously approved the ordinance amending the comprehensive plan.