

CERTIFIED ZONING SERVICES

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Whitewater Township
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Re: November 2019 Staff Report

December 6, 2019

Dear Whitewater Township officials,

Please consider this letter as my staff report representing activity related to planning and zoning for the month of November 2019 (and prior). Although there was a brief lull in permit activity going into November, general inquiries and permit activity increased at the end of the month and entering into December.

Since joining Whitewater Township on August 1st of this year I have had an opportunity to get to know most of you just a bit better – we have engaged in conversations about the history of Whitewater Township (both social and political); we have discussed past practices of previous zoning administrators and their relationships with the board and planning commissions; we have talked about the zoning board of appeals and particular cases, and planning commission activities and processes have been discussed. However, and more importantly, I hope that each of you have gained a sense of understanding about my sincere dedication to serve Whitewater Township.

Supervisor – I appreciate the communication and support from the supervisor’s office on all matters related to my position of zoning administrator. The transition from 3 or 4 days a week position to only being present 1 day each week (more often as needed), requires a brief learning curve of patience. The most important discussions that we have engaged in have been centered around providing seamless customer service to Whitewater Township. In essence, we have discussed streamlining the Land Use (zoning) application and permitting process.

Important Note: ‘***streamlining***’ does **not** mean taking short cuts! ***Streamlining*** means a reworking of the process that ensures Whitewater Township continues to acquire relevant information required through the application and permitting process (perhaps through digital / electronic means). ***Streamlining*** means evaluating and auditing the current process for duplicative or unnecessary steps. ***Streamlining*** means becoming more efficient and productive at providing the required services while not sacrificing the quantity or quality of the service being provided.

I will continue to work with the Supervisor and ultimately the entire board to see if a new and revised process might be a good fit for Whitewater Township in order to enhance the customer service / permitting experience.

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Clerk – We are all aware that the Clerk is the centerpiece of the table – everything revolves around this person and that’s what allows the township to go ‘*round and round*. The Clerk is the important facilitator of the ‘final’ processes in planning and zoning, especially when it comes to notices and publications, documenting process timelines, and reconciling the proper procedures with the zoning administrator. [Document, Document, Document!]

The Clerk has had the opportunity to hear of some of my thoughts and concerns about the internal planning and zoning processes as well. The ultimate goal is to make everyone involved aware of the proper and necessary processes that must be accurately documented to defend our actions in the future.

Planning Commission – The Planning Commission has had an opportunity to visit with me on several occasions and to get a feel for my attitude towards the semi-autonomous nature of their work. I have made it clear that I am concerned about (*what appears to me to be*) an awkward and unnecessarily complex process. More specifically, I would like to work with *everyone* involved to ensure that there is a clear understanding of the responsibilities between the legislative, administrative, and quasi-judicial bodies that are Whitewater Township.

I see a strong sense of dedication from the planning commission membership – however, I also see a degree of uncertainty about the paths taken in the past to achieve various goals. At the end of the day everyone should feel comfortable in their positions. Everyone should understand what segment(s) of the populations interests they are representing (business, education, natural resources, etc.).

Master Plan – The title of this document should be self-explanatory, yet it is often just used as a book to rest on the shelf and collect dust. This is *the* community plan; for all of Whitewater Township, and should be referenced during any / all development projects, capital improvements, rezoning’s, ordinance reviews and amendments, and at any other time that the future of Whitewater Township may be impacted.

In October of 2019 the Whitewater Township Planning Commission documented their formal decision to begin a ‘*five-year review*’. They are kicking this process off with an open house preceding the January 8th, 2020 meeting. This is probably the most important task that any planning commission takes on for the sake of their community.

– Please allow me to make myself available to all of you (*and the public*) for any future discussions regarding planning and zoning activity in Whitewater Township. It is always my desire to be of service.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert A. Hall

Happy Holidays

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