

Thomas County Planning Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
May 23, 2023

The Thomas County Planning Commission convened in open and public session at 6:00 p.m., in the Commissioners meeting room of the Thomas County Courthouse, Thedford NE. Members present were Rahn Bek, Carolyn Warren, Shane Pettit, Linda Cowdin, and Jay Jones. Absent – Jennings, Maseberg. Motion made by Bek and second by Warren to excuse the absent members. Roll call vote: Ayes – Bek, Warren, Pettit, Cowdin, Jones. Nays – none. Absent – Maseberg, Jennings. Motion carried. Planning board member Maseberg arrived at 6:26 p.m. Also present were Thomas County Zoning Administrator/County Clerk Lorissa Hartman, Thomas County Board representative Charles Daly, Royce & Pauline Brown, Xavier & Connie Garza, and present by Zoom were Rick Adams, representative for Verizon and Jessica Coyle, Cherry County Zoning Administrator.

Chairman Jones stated open meeting guidelines are posted as required by law and copies are available, if requested.

Notice of meeting was given by publication in the Thomas County Herald on May 11, 2023 and by required mailings to landowners and adjacent counties and villages.

Motion made by Cowdin and second by Warren to adopt the May 23, 2023 meeting agenda. Roll call vote: Ayes – Jones, Cowdin, Pettit, Warren, Bek. Nays – none. Absent – Maseberg, Jennings. Motion carried.

Motion made by Warren and second by Bek to approve the April 17, 2023 meeting minutes as published in the Thomas County Herald on April 27, 2023. Roll call vote: Ayes – Warren, Bek, Cowdin, Jones, Pettit. Nays – none. Absent – Jennings, Maseberg. Motion carried.

Chairman Jones recessed the regular meeting to open the Public hearing for the co-locate towers at 6:02 p.m.

Rick Adams reviewed the application for the co-locate on the Seneca site location. He also explained to the board about this application qualifying as eligible application under Federal Regulations Section 6409, which means that the county only has sixty days to approve the application and that under this rule the permit cannot be denied.

Royce Brown questioned if this co-locate would increase the coverage area for Verizon in the Middle Loup area. He stated that Burlington Northern uses Verizon and this would help increase the coverage in the area.

Rahn Bek questioned since there was already an existing generator, why would an additional generator need installed. Rick Adams stated that each carrier would prefer to have their own equipment, in this case their own generator.

Rick Adams then reviewed the application for the co-locate on the Dismal site location. No questions from the public.

Chairman Jones closed the public hearing for the co-locate on cell phone towers at 6:12 p.m.

Motion made by Bek and second by Cowdin to recommend approval to the Thomas County Board of Commissioners for Industrial Tower/Verizon Applicant #1 (Dismal) and Applicant #2 (Seneca) to co-locate on the existing cell phone towers. Roll call vote: Ayes- Jones, Cowdin, Pettit, Warren, Bek. Nays – none. Absent – Jennings, Maseberg. Motion carried.

Chairman Jones recessed the regular meeting at 6:13 p.m. to enter into the public hearing for the VAD District regulations.

Chairman Jones reviewed with the public the reason for creating the Village Area Development (VAD) District Regulations. These regulations would cover the former Village of Seneca boundary. Initially when the Village of Seneca was unincorporated this land fell into the AGR District. The County Board asked the Planning Board to create new regulations to cover the former Village. After reviewing examples from Lincoln County and Custer County the Planning Board chose the Custer County regulations and worked with those regulations and adjusted them to fit Thomas County.

The public in attendance were given a chance to review the information. Questions were asked for clarification on the allowable uses and permit process.

Chairman Jones closed the public hearing at 6:22 p.m.

Motion made by Cowdin and second by Bek to recommend approval of the VAD District regulations to the Thomas County Board of Commissioners. Roll call vote: Ayes – Pettit, Bek, Jones, Warren, Cowdin. Nays – none. Absent – Maseberg, Jennings. Motion carried.

Discussion was held on the electric charging stations. Currently the zoning regulations do not include this type of use. Zoning Administrator Lorissa Hartman reached out to Lincoln County to see how they handle this type of usage. Lincoln County does not require a permit for this type of use, unless the plans when filed, shows that this installation took away the required parking stalls based on regulations. The Planning Board agreed that if anyone would like to install the electric charging stations in Thomas County, they would need to file the plans for the site with the Zoning Administrator, Planning Board Chairman and County Attorney. The three individuals will review the plans to determine whether a permit is required.

Discussion was held on the permit process for co-locate on cell phone towers. Based on the information provided earlier on the rules of Section 6409 of the federal Spectrum Act and Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The board decided that the site plan needs filed with the Zoning Administrator and with review by the Planning Board Chairman and County Attorney to determine whether it meets the eligibility requirements of Section 6409 or if a special use permit is required. Once again Lincoln County Zoning Administrator Judy Clark advised this is how Lincoln County handles a co-locate permit.

No additional public comment was heard at this time.

Chairman Jones adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.

Thomas County Zoning Administrator  
Lorissa Hartman