VILLAGE OF EPHRAIM PLAN COMMITTEE
WORKING SESSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 27, 2026 - 12:00 PM
9996 WATER STREET

Present: Andy Bartelt, Laird Hart, Grace Held, Monique McClean, Rick Hoyerman, BD Thorp, and Ken Nelson – Chair.

Absent: None.

Staff: Brent Bristol - Village Administrator and Kim Roberts – Deputy Clerk.

Guests: Julie & Scott Barnes, Matt Meacham, Sarah Martin, Lane Methner (online), Krzysztof Krol, Sarah Koehler, and Mukhtar Aghazada.

Call to Order: K. Nelson called the working session to order at 12:00 PM.

K. Nelson called the Plan Committee Ordinance Working Session to order at 12:00 PM. He noted that there were many business owners in attendance. He invited each of them to provide a comment regarding the sign ordinance. He explained that all Plan Committee members received the survey that the Ephraim Business Council (EBC) conducted.

Krzysztof Krol introduced himself as the owner of the Prince of Pierogi restaurant in Shorewood Village. He explained that last year a drunk driver took out the Shorewood Village sign, and businesses in Shorewood Village were given an allowance to use sandwich boards for the three (3) to four (4) months that the sign was repaired. What they found over that period was that the individual signage provided for new customers, for customers to know that the business was located in Shorewood Village, as well as signifying that the business was open. Once the sign was repaired, the temporary sandwich board signage had to be removed, which led customers to think the businesses were closed. He further explained that with the increased speed limit within the Village and a multi-business sign with ten (10) other businesses, a driver cannot read all the businesses on the sign in the time that they are approaching the development. He stressed that they are open to finding a better solution. He suggested that all the businesses operating in Shorewood Village could have a sign separated from the large multi-business sign, such as a sandwich board or a small sign, that would be placed during operating hours and removed at night.

Scott Barnes of Door County Rock and Gem and Ephraim Motel stressed the need to differentiate the sign ordinance by zoning districts. He explained that in the Commercial North District, setbacks are different than those of the Historic District; the speed is higher in the Commercial North District; therefore, the scale of signage needs to be different than signage in the Historic District. He noted that four (4) years ago they built the new Door County Rock and Gem building. They've had an open feather flag since day one. He explained that they have documented how the feather flag impacts business. On days when staff have forgotten to put it out, there is a drop in business. Signage is an important part of building a business, he said. He further noted that signage should be regulated, but it has to account for the differences between the Historic District and the Commercial North District. With full-time, year-round employees, he stressed that he would do whatever is necessary to keep his business going; flags are essential to that.

Scott Barnes suggested that all flags (flag, umbrellas with a logo, and feathered flags) need to be better defined and limited to the wording "open". There should be a height limit on feather flags of eight feet (8'). He asked that American Flags not be limited. Barnes brought up that there is an "open" feathered flag at the intersection of Shannon Lane and Water Street that is oversized and is a traffic hazard. There is a reasonable argument for size limitations to prevent traffic safety issues. He further suggested that businesses should remove flags at the end of the business day and only fly them during business hours.

K. Nelson noted that no flags or signage should be located in the road right-of-way (ROW).

Scott Barnes explained it will be challenging due to the fact that the bases of some feathered flags are placed out of the ROW, but the flag flies into the ROW. Barnes added that product advertising should not be allowed. He stressed that he was glad to work with the Committee to make sure their investments and interests are not screwed with. He takes the subject seriously and would like to work together to get the ordinance right.

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Mukhtar Aghazada, from Anatolia Cuisine in Shorewood Village, thanked the Committee for its work on the sign ordinance. He explained that his permanent sign was damaged the previous year, and that a sandwich board placed near the road helped sales and customer awareness. After he was told by Bristol that the sandwich board was not permitted, he reported that sales dropped and customers called to ask whether the restaurant was closed. He said his restaurant sits at the back of the lot, and that umbrellas and the layout make it hard for passersby to see. He plans to stay open through the winter, when many Ephraim restaurants are closed. He asked for a small sandwich board during business hours, year-round, showing the type of food (Mediterranean), hours, and days of operation.

Julie Barnes, Ephraim Motel / Door County Rock and Gem**,** asked whether the ordinance addresses movable signage on vehicles. She noted that vehicles bearing signs are sometimes parked in one location permanently. She described an older 1950s truck on her property that currently carries "Ephraim Motel" lettering. She would like to repaint it with the rock shop's logo and incorporate it into the mining area. She said she did not see the topic in the current ordinance and suggested it be addressed in the new one.

Matt Meacham, Somerset Inn & Suites**,** stated that the Village does not have a signage problem but an enforcement problem. He urged that existing ordinances be enforced before any changes to the ordinance are made. He noted that a prior ordinance already allows a sandwich board for ninety (90) days with a permit. If changes are still needed after enforcement, he recommended two (2) separate sets of provisions, one for the Historic District and one for the North Commercial District, which he described as distinct areas. He said he could support one (1) feather flag for each business maximum on the north end to draw attention, but not more. He also noted that the lawn art pictured in the meeting materials is allowable, and questioned why it was included. He encouraged the Committee to take no action until current ordinances are enforced.

Sarah Martin, Wilson's / Red Barn Biscuit Company, President of the Ephraim Business Council, agreed that the Commercial North District and the Historic District should be treated differently, and agreed that there is an enforcement problem. She disagreed with waiting, saying the off-season is a good time to clarify the rules so businesses can prepare for reopening in spring. She favored greater uniformity and consistency on the north end. She recalled that during the last sign ordinance review, a seasonal "open" flag had been proposed. It would be a single common design purchased through the Village or the Ephraim Business Council. That design would tell customers a business is open and keep a uniform look consistent with Ephraim's character. The approach should convey that Ephraim extends from one end of the village to the other.

K. Nelson emphasized that no signs, including temporary signs, are permitted in the road right-of-way. Right-of-way width varies from very narrow downtown to about sixty-six feet (66') on the north end, and the Chair advised anyone unsure of the boundary to contact Bristol. He reviewed the general purpose of the sign provisions, which is to protect public health, safety, welfare, convenience, and aesthetics. He said the Historic District downtown differs from the Commercial North District, but that the Village should remain recognizably Ephraim throughout. Specifically, he did not want "tens and tens" of feathered flags creating a "carnival look." He then noted that the exempt signs section applies the right-of-way restriction throughout, and walked through the exempt sign categories, including vacancy/no vacancy, open/closed, and sale signs.

K. Nelson noted that "open" signs are defined as fifteen square feet (15 sq ft), which has caused problems. He said that traditionally a 3-by-5-foot flag was used, often an American flag, so that the flag being out meant the business was open. The current fifteen square feet (15 sq ft) standard does not preclude a sign fifteen feet (15') feet tall and one foot (1') wide, which he identified as a flaw that allowed feather flags.

A discussion was held regarding the sign ordinance. Held suggested that businesses should only be allowed one (1) feather flag with a maximum height of eight feet (8'). She felt that they should be uniform so that they would be a little less distracting than all the different multicolor flags. She noted that she was not in favor of sandwich board signs because they would make the Village look cluttered. For Shorewood Village, she suggested the association redesign or reconfigure their current sign. McClean empathized with the businesses in Shorewood Village with their location in the Historic District and most of the businesses tucked back away. She felt that there should be differences between the Commercial District and the Historic District, and the ordinance should address the difference but maintain uniformity. She explained that she has a "wine" flag for her business in the Historic

District due to the need to quickly educate customers passing by tastefully. McClean further addressed that she wasn't sure how to solve the enforcement problem. She noted that a feathered flag is OK when out only when open, but she noted that the impact is lost when there are too many. She desired the ordinance to allow for visibility, understanding of what the business is, and to look like Ephraim. Thorp agreed with Sarah Wilson that now is the time to look at the ordinance as well as enforcement. He supported uniformity as well as differences for the Historic District and Commercial North Zoning district. Hart stressed that the sign ordinance has a lot of provisions and right now, there are an awful lot of violations. He understood the need to treat the Historic District differently than the Commercial North; however, doing so may cause issues with differential treatment. He further noted that the feathered sign was likely not around when the ordinance was written. He asked what the difference was between a feather flag and a flag. Is a feather flag a flag, or a sign? He stressed the need for enforcement. Hoyerman discussed the confusion about size, which he highlighted as an area where the ordinance could be clearer. Hoyerman was hesitant to change the ordinance before committing to enforcement. He suggested that the Committee focus on a simple ordinance change to address feather flags and focus on enforcement and see how the Village looks. He further noted that he believed the business community must have helped write the current ordinance, but expressed disappointment that only fourteen (14) responses were received for the survey. The ordinance has big stakes for businesses, and Hoyerman expressed the desire to hear from more people. Bartelt pointed out that question three (3) of the survey asked if the current sign ordinance for permanent signage was adequate for your business. He noted that eleven (11) respondents replied yes and only three (3) replied no. The responses indicate that there is not a problem; rather, it is an enforcement issue. Bartelt inquired why enforcement was difficult.

Bristol explained that most of the issues relate to temporary signage. Permanent signage is in good standing with no issues. He discussed that in preparation for this meeting, a letter went out to all businesses acknowledging the sign violations within the Village, letting businesses know that the working session on the sign ordinance would be occurring with business participation encouraged. The next step, he stressed, would be enforcement letters to individual properties.

Bartelt added that if the violations were cleaned up, a lot of the issues would be resolved, except for specific business community needs. He added that there needed to be reasonable control and uniformity.

Julie Barnes added that Door County Rock & Gem has a Fish Creek location. All the open signs are the same throughout Fish Creek. The business council provides one (1) free of charge annually.

McClean offered that the deadline for the survey was extended multiple times, with reminders sent as well.

Sarah Martin noted that the response rate for the survey was typical.

K. Nelson provided some observations. He noted that it was interesting that all businesses in the Village were made aware of the meeting, but the biggest abusers didn't bother to show up. He added that he would like the Committee to discuss multi-business properties such as Shorewood Village to assist with visibility. He further noted that lighting in North Ephraim has become more common, and he would like to maintain the Dark Sky. He added that he would like to review patio lights, building lights, etc. Further, he stressed the need for uniformity and enforcement.

Matt Meacham discussed that the Protected Waterfront Ordinance was intended to avoid uniformity; however, we are now talking about uniformity throughout the Village with signage. He added that the size of the sign is important. There is no ordinance, he said, against twinkle lights.

K. Nelson clarified the need for enforcement. He asked the Committee if there was interest in tweaking the ordinance for feathered flags.

Matt Meacham noted that feathered flags seem to be the problem. He added that he would be in favor of businesses having one (1) feathered flag in Commercial North; however, he would not want to see them in the Historic District.

Scott Barnes discussed enforcement being a defining issue. He added that before purchasing property in Ephraim, he clearly understood his obligations. There was no "I didn't know" as a new business owner. He further

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explained that he did not feel the current ordinance was sufficient. He would like to see signage allowed on his building.

K. Nelson discussed that business registration would be helpful, as the new businesses are the biggest abusers of the sign ordinance. That way, the Village could work together with the businesses and introduce them to the ordinance.

Bristol explained that the line in the sand has been drawn. Letters were sent out to notify businesses of the discussion regarding signs and that enforcement action would likely come out of the meeting.

A brief discussion was held regarding Shorewood Village. Krzysztof Krol again stated the need for businesses to be able to be found and communicate that they are open. Two (2) businesses are open past 5 PM, when the others are not. K. Nelson suggested that the association work together. Krzysztof Krol replied that they disagree.

There was consensus among Plan Committee members to discuss feather flags (size and number) and multi-business signage.

Bristol encouraged the Committee to discuss flags and feather flags with messages and whether they were temporary signage.

Hart remarked that the ordinance has an interesting organization. The bottom line is that any sign requires a permit with exemptions. He suggested changing the list of "signs exempted" categories.

K. Nelson added that "open flags" in §17.15(18)(c) needed to be tightened up.

K. Nelson reviewed that small changes were required in §17.20 Protected Waterfront Ordinance. Section 5 needed to be renamed from "Special Exception Review" to "Special Exceptions for Public Projects". He noted that the Village Board felt there could be confusion without the clarification that the exception is only for public projects. Further, the Village Board would like "buildings, structures" removed from the section as well. The idea is to wait until there is another change to Chapter 17 and make a package to send back to the Village Board for approval.

Bristol provided background regarding section 5 of the Protected Waterfront Ordinance, noting that the section had been intended to be used for projects such as the beach and marina building.

Hoyerman moved, McClean seconded to adjourn at 1:42 PM, all ayes. Motion carried.

Recorded by Kim Roberts – Deputy Clerk

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