

VILLAGE OF SISTER BAY
HYBRID SPECIAL PLAN COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 2025
SISTER BAY-LIBERTY GROVE FIRE STATION – 2258 MILL ROAD
APPROVED VERSION

At 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 11, 2025 Denise Bhirdo, the Chair of the Plan Commission, called the hybrid special meeting of the Village of Sister Bay Plan Commission to order.

Present: Plan Commission Chair Denise Bhirdo, and Commission members Nate Bell, Patrice Champeau, and Ron Kane.

Excused: Mitch Ohnesorge and Laurel Harff

Staff Members: Village Administrator Julie Schmelzer, Utilities Manager Megan Barnes, and Administrative Assistant Janal Suppanz

Others: Sydney Swan of the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission, Michelle Lawrie of the DCEDC, Nick and Mary Deviley and two of their daughters, Louise Howson, Bjorn Johnson, Don Howard, Steve Musinsky, Skip Heidler, Ellie Soderberg-Guger, Aaron Bernstein, Dave Matasek, Peggy Cuniff, Jill Gohdes-Wiebe, Terry Wolf, "Barb", "John R.", Lisa O'Hearn, Tyler Duvall, John Wettstein, John McMurray, two unidentified individuals who appeared in person, and one unidentified individual who appeared via telephone.

Agenda Item No. 2: Approval of the Agenda:

Motion by Bell, second by Champeau that the Agenda for the March 11, 2025 special meeting of the Plan Commission be approved as presented. Motion carried – All ayes.

Agenda Item No. 3: Comments, correspondence and concerns from the public:

Bhirdo asked if anyone would like to comment regarding a non-agenda item. No one responded.

Agenda Item No. 4. Pubic Hearing/Action as Appropriate:

• **Updated 20-Year Comprehensive Plan:**

At 5:31 P.M. Bhirdo called the Public Hearing on the updated 20 Year Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Sister Bay to order.

Schmelzer explained that a draft of the updated 20 Year Comprehensive Plan for the Village of Sister Bay had been included in the digital packets for this meeting, and she also noted that a related Public Hearing Notice had been published, posted and mailed to all property owners in the Village. She then read the Public Hearing Notice aloud, and also noted that letters that were received from Paul Grossmann of 10870 N. Bay Shore Drive, Attorney Timothy McCoy of Godfrey-Kahn, S.C., and Mary Deviley were included in the digital packets for this meeting.

- *In his letter Mr. Grossmann states that he believes there are too many rules of governance that impede the growth of Sister Bay as a community.*
- *In his letter Attorney McCoy indicates that he represents Barbara Hull, who collectively owns and controls approximately seven parcels of land that comprise approximately*

1 76 acres of developable land within the Village limits. Ms. Hull's property is the single
2 largest tract of land that is capable of being developed within the Village, and
3 according to Attorney McCoy she is very disappointed that Village officials have never
4 met with her or communicated with her in any other fashion regarding the potential
5 development of any of her property. She is currently contemplating selling her
6 property, and believes the Village's persistent failure to meaningfully engage with her,
7 coupled with the fact that public discussions will be taking place regarding what should
8 actually be done with her property is "counterproductive". Therefore, she is inviting
9 Village officials to consider having a candid discussion(s) with her regarding this issue
10 soon.

- 11 • Ms. Deviley indicates that she and her family reside at 10438 Orchard Drive on the old
12 Vactionland Farm/Carole's Corral that was owned by Willard Kramer for many years.
13 Collectively they own 40 acres of property that is zoned CS-1, approximately 6 acres of
14 property that is zoned B-1 – Commercial, and 10 acres of land that is zoned R-2 –
15 Multiple Family Residence. Over the last ten years she and her husband have made a
16 number of renovations to the farmhouse, the barn, the garage, and other outbuildings
17 on their property, and they have also planted trees, they have a large garden, and raise
18 chickens, and in light of that fact they are requesting that the zoning for their farm
19 remain CS-1. They also are requesting that the B-1 designation for a portion of their
20 property remain, and that Village officials work with them as they attempt to develop
21 their land that is zoned R-2 into single family and multi-family dwellings. They also are
22 hopeful that Village officials will work with them to find and agree upon the best route
23 for any new walking/bike paths that could impact their property in the future.

24
25 Bhirdo asked if anyone would like to comment regarding the proposed Comprehensive Plan, and Bjorn Johnson
26 indicated that he was appearing on behalf of Al Johnson's Restaurant and Butik and the Johnson Family. He
27 subsequently presented a copy of Map 7.2 – Future Land Use, that had been included in the draft of the
28 Comprehensive Plan to the Commission members, and then specifically referred to the property that the
29 Johnson Family owns in the downtown area which he described as "the Johnson Mall". It is his understanding
30 that in October, when the Plan Commission was reviewing a draft of the Future Land Use Map, the decision had
31 been made that all of "the Johnson Mall" should be depicted as "Commercial", but in the draft of the plan that
32 is being reviewed this evening land use designations of "Woodland", "Residential" and "Natural Area" are
33 depicted for portions of that land. Mr. Johnson and his family would prefer that the Future Land Use Map once
34 again depict that all their property has been designated "Commercial".

35
36 **It was the consensus that the majority of the designated future use of all the property that Mr. Johnson**
37 **referred to shall revert to "Commercial", but that the "Natural Area" designation shall remain.**

38
39 Nick Deviley reiterated the comments that had been made by his wife, Mary, in the previously mentioned letter,
40 and asked what "the plan" actually is for increasing residential uses in the Village. Bhirdo responded that to her
41 knowledge there really have not been any conversations regarding projected population growth in the Village
42 yet. In conclusion Mr. Deviley stressed that if at all possible he and Mary would like their farm "to be left alone"
43 as they want their children and grandchildren to be able to enjoy it for years to come.

44
45 **Discussion took place regarding Mr. and Mrs. Deviley's concerns, and it was eventually the consensus that**
46 **their wishes for the future use designations for their property shall be honored. Therefore, the requested**
47 **amendments to the Future Land Use Map shall be made.**
48

1 Louise Howson indicated that there is a notation in the plan that in order to accommodate future growth some
2 of the designations for the woodlands in the area where the Little Sister Resort used to be located as well as the
3 natural areas within Bay Ridge Golf Course have been changed to "Residential". She expressed concerns that
4 there is potential for a large amount of open land and/or natural areas to be disturbed if housing is created in
5 the stated areas, and also pointed out that the golf course property is currently not being maintained and is
6 gradually "growing in". Before Village officials formally re-zone any of the previously mentioned property, she
7 believes the owners of the affected parcels must be asked what they actually want to do with their property.

8
9 **Schmelzer responded that before any property is re-zoned a public hearing is required. She also noted that**
10 **Village officials must see that a related Public Hearing Notice is sent to any and all affected property owners**
11 **as well as adjoining property owners.**

12
13 Don Howard of 2536 Fieldcrest Lane indicated that he has had conversations with Diane Trenchard and her
14 son, who is now the owner of Bay Ridge Golf Course, and it is his understanding that they both want to leave
15 the property in its current state for as long as they own it.

16
17 **Discussion took place regarding Howson's concerns, and it was eventually the consensus that the property**
18 **that she referred to shall be designated as "Natural Areas" on the Future Land Use Map.**

19
20 Steve Musinsky of 10519 Fieldcrest Road noted that when he and his wife bought their property a former Village
21 Administrator informed him that the Village had anticipated that at some point in time a portion of their
22 property would be heavily wooded. He and his wife did not want to see a lot of evergreens or hardwood trees
23 on their property, and, instead, they decided to plant a few fruit trees and left the remainder of their property
24 as open space. In conclusion Mr. Musinsky indicated that the Future Land Use Map that was included in the
25 Comprehensive Plan now actually depicts "Woodlands" on a portion of his property. To be perfectly honest
26 neither he nor his wife have any desire to remove any of their fruit trees or plant any more trees on their property
27 as they like having open space.

28
29 **Schmelzer responded that the "Woodlands" designation on the Future Land Use Map merely means that the**
30 **Village's goal is to have the property become heavily wooded "at some point in time". She also indicated**
31 **that unless and until Mr. and Mrs. Musinsky decide to do something different with their property the fruit**
32 **trees should be allowed to remain and it won't be necessary for them to plant any more trees.**

33
34 Don Howard stated that in spite of the fact that all the property around his residence is shown as "Woodlands"
35 on the Future Land Use Map, his property has been designated "Residential", and asked if there is potential for
36 Village officials to require that his property must revert to woodlands at some point in time. He then explained
37 that he is asking this question because he and his wife plan to leave their home and the adjoining property to
38 their children and grandchildren.

39
40 **Schmelzer reiterated that the "Woodlands" designation on the Future Land Use Map merely means that the**
41 **Village's goal is to have the property become heavily wooded at some point in time. If Mr. and Mrs. Howard's**
42 **children continue to maintain their property as well as the home and other outbuildings that are constructed**
43 **upon it there shouldn't be any issues.**

44
45 John Wettstein indicated that he owns a unit in Hidden Maples Condos. It is his understanding that a portion of
46 Applewood Road is actually owned by the Condo Association, and, therefore, he asked if there are any plans for
47 construction of a trail in that area of the Village. He then referred to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Network Map

1 that appears in the draft of the Comprehensive Plan, and expressed concerns that a future trail could negatively
2 impact some of the tree plantings that the Condo Association did in the right-of-way along Applewood Road.

3
4 **Schmelzer responded that if, at any point in time, Village officials decide that a trail should actually be**
5 **created on any of the property that is owned by the Condo Association, before any of the related work**
6 **commences notice would be mailed to all the unit owners, representatives of the Hidden Maples Condo**
7 **Association, and the adjoining property owners. Any or all of those individuals, as well as representatives of**
8 **the Condo Association will be encouraged to contact the Village Administrator or send a related letter to the**
9 **Plan Commission if they have any questions or concerns about the proposed trail.**

10
11 Mr. Musinsky started to read a portion of a prepared statement that addresses potential grammatical revisions
12 he believes should be made to the draft of the Comprehensive Plan aloud, and he also voiced several concerns
13 about some of the provisions of the draft Comprehensive Plan. Because the statement was quite lengthy Bhirdo
14 requested that he provide a copy of that document to Schmelzer and Suppanz so that it can be included in "the
15 official record", and he complied with that request. A copy of Mr. Musinsky's statement is hereby attached and
16 incorporated by reference, and Schmelzer indicated that she will see that a copy of it is provided to the
17 Commission members in as timely a fashion as possible.

18
19 John Mc Murray of 10638 Forest Lane asked if a traffic study has ever been conducted in the Village, and the
20 Commission members responded that to their knowledge, because of cost considerations, such a study has
21 never actually been conducted. (Bell and Bhirdo noted that at one point staff members did see that a "traffic
22 counter" was installed at the base of "the Sister Bay Hill" during "the season", and they also noted that the data
23 that was collected was reviewed by the members of the Parks, Property & Streets Committee. Bhirdo stressed
24 that the "traffic counter" data is far less complex than the data that would be included in an actual "traffic
25 study".) Mr. Mc Murray responded that in spite of cost considerations he believes the Plan Commission has a
26 duty to "look forward", and should recommend that an actual "traffic study" be conducted "sooner rather than
27 later".

28
29 Michelle Lawrie of the DCEDC indicated that she realizes there are some things that are unique to Sister Bay,
30 but she also pointed out that work is progressing on Door County's Strategic Plan, and she and the other
31 employees from the DCEDC would happy to provide any data that is requested by the Plan Commission or Ms.
32 Swan and her associates. The Commission members thanked Ms. Lawrie for taking the time to attend this
33 meeting, and they also indicated that they appreciate her offer.

34
35 Howson referred to the section of the Comprehensive Plan that pertains to short-term rentals, and suggested
36 that the term "rentable nights" rather than "rentable units" be used. She also acknowledged that the Tourism
37 Zone statistics can be quite confusing, and suggested that if Ms. Swan and her associates have any questions
38 regarding the room tax statistics for the Village they contact the employees in the Door County Tourism Zone
39 Commission Office.

40
41 At 7:05 P.M. Bhirdo asked if anyone else would like to comment regarding the draft of the Village's 20 Year
42 Comprehensive Plan, and when no one responded she declared that the Public Hearing was officially closed.

43
44 The Commission members jointly reviewed the previously mentioned draft, and during that time Bhirdo pointed
45 out several typographical and/or grammatical errors. Schmelzer and Suppanz took note of all the suggested
46 revisions.

1 *Since timing is of the essence, Schmelzer indicated that she will see that the revised version of the draft of the*
2 *Comprehensive Plan as well as a draft Resolution are included in the digital packets for the next meeting of the*
3 *Commission so that a related referral can be made to the Village Board at their next regular monthly meeting*
4 *that has been scheduled for 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, March 25, 2025.*

5
6 **Agenda Item No. 5. Matters To Be Placed on a Future Agenda or Referred to a Committee, Official or**
7 **Employee:**

8 **Agenda Item No. 6. Next Meeting:**

9 *Due to scheduling conflicts the next regular monthly meeting of the Plan Commission has been rescheduled*
10 *for 5:30 P.M. on Tuesday, March 18, 2025.*

11 *At that meeting the following issues will be addressed:*

- 12 • **Discussion regarding the Village's R-4 Zoning District regulations**
- 13 • **Discussion regarding the Village's Dark Sky regulations**
- 14 • **Discussion regarding "building height averaging" regulations**
- 15 • **Review of the draft Resolution that approves the Village's 20 Year Comprehensive Plan**

16
17 **Agenda Item No. 9. Adjournment:**

18 *At 7:35 P.M. a motion was made by Kane, seconded by Champeau that the March 11, 2025 special meeting*
19 *of the Plan Commission be adjourned. Motion carried – All ayes.*

20
21 Respectfully submitted,

22 

23 Janal Suppanz,
24 Administrative Assistant
25

POPULATION PROJECTIONS – PAGE 6

The projections indicate that the Village will experience an overall growth of 23%, or 261 people, between 2020 and 2050. The Village must plan for this growth and ensure that infrastructure is adequate to service the population.

I am always skeptical of population projections since they always seem to assume nothing from the past will change going forward. For example, with so many village residents over the age of 65 and nothing in place to accommodate aging, it would seem realistic to assume the increase in the younger population will be offset by more and more of the older population leaving.

The bigger question for younger people moving into the area is most likely can they afford to move or stay here?

HOUSING UNITS – Page 7

Of the 528 occupied housing units, 45% are owner-occupied units, while 55% are renter-occupied.

If only 238 out of 528 houses are owner occupied, this would seem to leave few residents willing to support long term investment in the future of the Village since a renters interest is month to month, not 40 years. Years ago, the City of Denver had this issue and could not even get a referendum passed to fix a failing sewer system because so many residents did not see themselves staying there long term.

AGE OF HOUSING- Page 8

According to 2022 ACS estimates, 150 homes have been added to the housing stock since the year 2000.

23% of the owner occupied housing was built between 2010-2019.

How many of these “new” homes were the result of tearing down an existing home to build a new larger home? This not only eliminates affordable housing and raises the median home price, but consumes building materials without an increase in housing units. Contractors I have spoke to say this is becoming common place.

Sister Bay Comprehensive Plan

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY – Page 10

Affordable housing is generally defined as housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30% of gross income for housing costs, including rent, mortgage, and utilities.

Mortgage companies I have dealt with also include insurance as a housing cost and a condition of the mortgage.

REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS – Page 18

The statistics don't seem to consider the present shortage of employees in occupations such as truck drivers, construction trades, mechanics, and healthcare. Are the projected numbers how many people are needed or how many are expected in the occupation?

Also, I'm not sure how relevant regional statistics are to Sister Bay.

SWOT ANALYSIS, STRENGTHS – Page 22

Active government and abundance of planned projects –

I would agree an active government can be a good thing, but because of planned projects? The bigger question is does the community support these projects?

Night sky friendly community with minimal light intrusion –

Considering Newport State park may lose its dark sky rating, is this a strength? Sister Bay does not seem to limit or seek to promote limiting night lighting. A night sky friendly community does not require lighting up streets in residential neighborhoods. This not only lights up the night sky, it also adds to the monthly Village electric bill.

WEAKNESSES – Page 22

Congested downtown during summer

This would seem to be good for business and a strength since an uncongested downtown Sister Bay is called winter.

OPPORTUNITIES – Page 22

NETC vocational training facility

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK – Page 28

To make this vision a reality, the Village should continue to plan for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, or widened shoulders at a minimum, during all future roadway construction or reconstruction projects.

Widening or adding shoulders does not result in pedestrians walking or biking on the shoulder but does result in higher traffic speeds, especially during tourist season.

Not enough shoulders are not the problem. The problem is:

Speeding drivers who don't slow down or stop when overtaking bicycles and pedestrians, or people walking their dog.

Pedestrians walking with traffic and wearing dark clothing at night.

Cyclists riding 2 or 3 abreast, sometimes against traffic, and at night with dark clothing and no lights, ignoring "stop" and other traffic signs.

A family of 4 pushing a stroller with a young child in hand, are not going to push a stroller or walk on a gravel shoulder. Bicyclists have told me driving on gravel shoulders is dangerous. Some sections of the new shoulders on Country Lane have steep unstable slopes which will only erode over time or collapse under weight. In my experience, these shoulders are a complete waste of material and money.

BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK – Page 28

To find out more about crashes that have occurred in the Village, visit the Community Maps Application.

This application doesn't work without a login userID and password. Considering this data is the basis for many of the safety assumptions and spending, this must be available to anyone reading the plan.

MAP 4.3 BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN NETWORK – Page 29

Widening Fieldcrest Road is not going to do anything for safety, but will turn a residential access road into a high speed shortcut between STH 57 and STH 42. There already is a high speed minor arterial to STH 42. It's called STH 57. If you build it, they will come.

If there are concerns about pedestrians from the Glen Lane apartment complex walking on the road, then complete or at least mark a walking trail from the back of the complex to STH 42. The Plan Commission has discussed this several times. This would connect residents to the established STH 42 walking / biking trails.

Widening streets or adding shoulders in residential areas should only be done with the consent of the fronting homeowners. This is called respect for residents.

ELECTRICAL AND NATURAL GAS – Page 48

According to the Door County Hazard Mitigation Plan 2022-2026, the Village is to encourage utility companies and development firms to bury power lines in new developments or when upgrades are made to existing lines or rapidly growing trees near power lines.

Encourage, perhaps, but if the utility eats the extra cost of burying lines, the effect is to pass on the required extra cost to other communities who are trying to keep service costs low and do not require burying lines. In the past, utilities have taken the position, "These customers elected the people who made this a requirement, so they can pick up the required extra costs." Years ago, a Public Service Commission chairman posed the question "Why should inner city residents have to subsidize burying power lines in wealthy suburbs?"

UTILITIES AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES – Page 50

Goal: To balance growth with the cost of providing quality public and private utilities and community facilities;.....

Objectives: - Page 50

Promote alternative energy sources compatible with the character of the Village.

There is nothing saying what this means, or how this will be done.

Objectives: - Page 50

Require power distribution lines and telecommunication conduits to be buried to preserve the beauty of the Village, while also minimizing service disruptions.

While this may improve appearances, it also increases the costs to provide service to homes and businesses. Trenching in power lines through bedrock is an additional cost to customers and does not necessarily reduce service outages or do anything to lower housing costs. And if an underground service fails, the customer could be out for days.

Support emergency service telecommunications that result in enhanced safety and emergency service.

Emergency service telecommunications during severe weather events only work if standby emergency power is available. Cell phones only work during a major severe weather event if the cell towers all have standby generation. Reference FCC report on communication and cell phone failures during super storm sandy.

Sister Bay Comprehensive Plan

COMMENTS -

Sister Bay has no respect for its residents. Everything is done for the tourist, and we get the bill. Money is no object, they just raise our taxes.

Despite having heard this for years from year round residents, even in other communities, and a number of attached comments about no respect for year round residents, I don't see anything in the plan addressing either the spending, or respect for residents.

Comments regarding summertime crowds and congestion in the Village.

I have always expected crowds or congestion when being at a popular area during the peak tourist season whether in summer or winter. It's part of the vacation experience.

Comments regarding traffic and parking.

Years ago, our Village administrator stated Sister Bay does not have a parking or traffic problem, it has a public transportation problem. If a business pays a yearly fee for their lack of enough parking, why not have that fee go to public transportation rather than building more parking lots?

Comments about the Village being overbuilt, over developed, and oversold.

So what's the plan to address these issues? There's a labor shortage, a housing shortage and residents are complaining about too many tourists. Why would the Village want to develop and promote even more tourism?