**Public Hearing on Campground Ordinance 4-21-2022 and 5-12-2022**

**April 21st Comments**

Mike Waltzing, 27211 State Road 35 (Whitetail Wilderness)

Mikes stated that he was somewhat concerned about the permit fee; he questioned if it was simply a campground business or included mobile home parks and/or VRBO and Airbnb rentals. Wayne responded that VRBO and Airbnb rentals can be taxed up to 8%. Sawyer County has a person who works to identify such operations and assure that they are licensed to aid the County in their tax collections. Wayne sees this coming in the future and that he hopes that the County would be engaged in that effort. Mobile home park owners are charged a $25. yearly license fee; residents are assessed personal property taxes which are collected by and paid to the Township by the park owners. Mike further asked about those who rents a house; it was pointed out that the owner of any rental property pays the appropriate property tax. Mike stated that he was really looking to assure the assessment is shared across the board. He questioned when it would take effect. Wayne responded that there will be an additional public hearing prior to the May Board meeting with action on the ordinance to be taken in June. Current thoughts are that the initial $25.00 annual campground permit would be due in January, the same as the license fee for mobile home parks. The infrastructure fee would be assessed in 2023, payable in January 2024. Suggestions for fees have ranged from $60. per site to $120. per site. Mike pointed out that many of their seasonal renters are not there every weekend. It was pointed out that the campground infrastructure fee is intended to support fire, ambulance and police service only; there is no intent to include support for the schools or other services included in property taxes.

Tim McIntyre offered that ambulance costs are projected to go up 7% per year.

Don Hamilton, 7158 S. Devils Lake Road

Don explained that the Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) had explored options for the fee structure for months; after working with John Jacobs and Will Janssen from DuFours Campground, they came to the conclusion the in initial process considered for determining how the fee should be structured was flawed in that while occupancy numbers go up and down, the costs are constant…personnel numbers for the services rendered do not fluctuate. For that reason, they moved to a “per site” approach.

Brent Pardun, 7885 Oak Street, Danbury

Brent questioned whether anyone had looked at the sites as if they were houses; if we were talking about a private home, what would the cost be?

Mike McLaughlin, 29065 State Road 35

Mike questioned what the standard evaluation for campgrounds is (he thought he’d heard it was $1000. per site). He pointed out that the Waltzing’s recommendation was based on days occupied based on one person per site; by contrast, he pays over $700. per year. He further pointed out that even if campers aren’t present, their campers are on site…if there is a robbery or a fire, it would be expected that either the sheriff’s department or fire department would respond accordingly.

The hearing closed at 7:00 p.m. to allow for a timely start to the Annual Meeting. Discussion will resume on May 12th.

**May 12th Comments:**

Karen Benson, 29092 Pardun Road

Karen expressed concern that someone might want to put a campground on their road; should that happen, she would like to have the neighboring properties informed. She also express concern that there don’t seem to be any consequences if someone has four campers (units) on a single site and is hoping for significant consequences. Her third concern related to septic systems; she questioned what the rules are for assuring portable systems are properly emptied. Another concern related to the number of docks allowed; she stated that they can tell when there are temporary campers on the river. She would like to see boats belonging to the campground are clearly identified. Her final concern was regarding the ongoing use of fireworks; she suffers from PTSD and fireworks are a trigger…and she knows others with the same challenge. She would like to see all of these concerns addressed in the ordinance.

Wayne explained that zoning (too many campers and/or or the establishment of a new campground is, ultimately, a zoning issue) is governed by the County and they take responsibility for notifying adjacent residents when a change is requested; “adjacent” being the operative word. He offered that he monitors the Burnett County Sentinel which carries the Land Use and Information Committee agendas where such items would be addressed; he suggested that concerned residents might want to do the same. He further stated that he knows the Land Services Office is trying to address violations regarding an excessive number of campers on private property but is limited, as are many others, by staffing shortages. He also offered that the new constable will address barking dogs and fireworks complaints. Finally, he explained that the number of docks allowed is controlled by the DNR.

Tim pointed out that there is a difference between an established campground and incidents where multiple units are camping on a private lot; issues of the latter type are addressed by the County Department of Land Services.

Karen asked how campgrounds are taxed; Tim explained that the campground owner pays property tax on the entire campground. Camper owners are taxed for personal property such as decks and storage structures.

Don Hamilton suggested that folks looking for more information might reference document ATCP (Agriculture Trade and Consumer Protection) 79. This document is referenced in the proposed ordinance and can be found on the Town Website’s Ordinance page. He further suggested DNR Publication FH 017 as a point of reference for the number of docks allowed on lakes and/or rivers.

Harm questioned the use of the word “fee” in the proposed ordinance; he feels it reads more like a tax. He feels the need for such funds absolutely exists but is concerned that the “fee” will simply raise revenue rather than offsetting a specific cost. His concern is that it could open the Township to issues in the future. He also questioned who would do the inspections referred to in the current draft; Don responded that he didn’t see any change in Town responsibility but would rather take action based on issues documented by the responsible agencies (State, County, DNR, etc.). (*Clerk’s note: in subsequent discussions during the Regular Town Board Meeting, it was pointed out that fees received would be dedicated to offsetting the cost of the following services: ambulance, fire department, sheriff and constable. Appropriate accounting codes will be established to provide clear accountability for the receipt and use of these fees.)*

Jean Waltzing indicated they had talked to the State about the registration requirement. Most of their campers are annual renters rather than people coming in for a random weekend. She indicated that the person she had talked to indicated that their yearly leases would be sufficient and that a weekly register would not be needed for those with annual leases.

The hearing closed at 7:00 p.m. to allow for a timely start to the Regular Town Board Meeting.