

City of Finlayson Planning & Zoning Commission

Annual Activity Report – 2024

Prepared by: Josette Koets, Vice-Chairman

Date: February 25, 2025

1) Introduction

a) The Planning & Zoning Commission was re-organized in April 2024 to review and update the Finlayson Comprehensive Plan that was written in 2004. This document defines and guides the City Council on decisions relating to zoning, recreation, building and services within the city. The purpose is to promote the health, safety, prosperity, aesthetics and general welfare of this community.

2) Meetings & Attendance

- a) The commission held ten (10) meetings in 2024, beginning in May 2024.
- b) The following members served on the commission:
- i) Rev. Nate Konkell, Chair
 - ii) Josette Koets, Vice Chair
 - iii) Nancy Liebelt, Secretary
 - iv) Other voting members: Norm Kester, Marge Haefner
 - v) Other non-voting members: Dennis Liebelt, Bruce Pogatchnik, Jeff Flaws
 - vi) Council Representatives: Joe Okun (resigned Aug 2024), Dave Auchter (Mayor)
- c) Attendance record: See attached Meeting Attendance – 2024

DATE	MEETING TYPE	KONKEL	KOETS	LIEBELT N	KESTER	HAEFNER	LIEBELT D	POGATCHNIK	FLAWS	OKUN	AUCHTER
5/5/2024	Organizational	x	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x
6/3/2024	Regular	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
7/9/2024	Regular	x	x	x		x	x		x	x	x
8/5/2024	Regular		x		x			x	x		x
9/3/2024	Regular	x		x			x	x	x		x
10/7/2024	Regular		x	x		x	x	x	x		x
10/28/2024	Special		x	x			x	x			x
11/4/2024	Regular	x	x	x	x	x	x	x			x
11/18/2024	Special		x	x			x	x	x		
12/2/2024	Regular	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x		x
TOTAL	10	6	9	9	4	6	9	9	8	2	9

3) Permits & Applications Processed

Application Type	# Reviewed	# Approved	# Denied	# Pending
Zoning Permits	4	3	0	1
Variances	0			
Conditional Use Permits (CUP)	0			
Subdivision Requests	0			

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- 4) Ordinance & Policy Updates - Zoning ordinance amendments, policy changes, or procedural updates made during the year:**
- a) The reorganized Planning & Zoning Commission is looking to update ordinances; however, no updates have been made thus far.
 - b) The Commission has revised the Planning Commission Structure & Procedures using the League of Minnesota Cities model policy. Per the adopted Structure & Policies, meetings follow MN Mayor's Association Rules of Order.
- 5) Comprehensive Plan & Long-Term Planning - Updates or progress made toward the city's long-term planning goals:**
- a) The commission entered into a Technical Assistant Contract with East Central Development Commission (ECDC) funded by the Blandin Foundation grant. In coordination with ECDC, the commission a community-wide survey was developed, reviewed, finalized and sent to residents and businesses in the city of Finlayson in December;
 - b) Edited the background and history of the Comprehensive Plan;
 - c) Reviewed and revised General Goals, Administrative Goals, Inter-Governmental Goals and Policies of the Comprehensive Plan;
 - d) Began reviewing Blight Ordinances.
- 6) Public Hearings & Community Engagement**
- a) Public Hearings Held: No public hearings were held. All regular and special meetings are held in accordance to the Open Meeting Law in Minnesota;
 - b) Community Feedback Summary - Key concerns raised by residents: A community-wide survey was developed and sent to all residents in December 2024. Results will be tabulated, discussed and decisions will be made, based on such feedback, that will guide the revision of the 2004 Comprehensive Plan.
- 7) Challenges & Issues Encountered - Enforcement issues, legal matters, or other challenges faced by the commission:**
- a) Unable to locate historic documents to review what has previously been done and approved;
 - b) Frequent turnover of city staff and council members;
 - c) Initially finding people to serve on P & Z Commission;
 - d) Excessive issues on agenda that is challenging to get through in meeting time;
 - e) Enforcement of ordinances that City council previously ignored;
 - f) Lack of a Zoning Administrator, Board of Appeals or Enforcement official to view and follow-through on blight letters;
 - g) Comprehensive Plan was in existence for 20 years but was not referred to nor followed by the City Council;
 - h) Deterioration of city infrastructures;
 - i) Building permit applications need to be updated;
 - j) Legal issues relating to road easement in a new city residential development which should not have happened if proper guidelines were followed by the City Council.
- 8) Goals & Recommendations for Next Year - Key priorities for the upcoming year, including potential ordinance updates or procedural improvements:**

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- a) Comprehensive Plan rewritten and completed;
- b) Reviewing all zoning ordinances and update where deemed practical and necessary;
- c) Continue to deal with former blight sites;
- d) Continue with legal help on road easement issue.

9) Conclusion & Acknowledgments - The commission's accomplishments and any key contributors:

- a) Received a \$25,000 Blandin grant for ERDC staff to help in Comprehensive Plan update;
- b) Sent a survey to all Finlayson residents and businesses;
- c) Full working Zoning & Planning Board;
- d) More community members are aware of ordinances;
- e) Having a very competent City Clerk and Deputy Clerk, Mayor and interested City Council;
- f) Having a Zoning Administrator hired.

Submitted by: Josette Koets, Vice-Chairman

Revised and formatted by: Liz Bernhardt, City Clerk