

TGIF

Taking Great Ideas Forward

Improving Northern Capital - Sustainable Development in the Northern Tier

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“The more refined and subtle our minds, the more vulnerable they are.”

-Paul Tournier-

Air Power

Northern Bayfield County could be advantaged with a landing strip suitable for private jets and larger propeller aircraft. Being able to provide convenient air transportation for prospective investors, collaborators and business owners has surfaced more than once in conversations as a barrier to development.

Really!

The airstrip at Telemark represents an advantage in the southern part of Bayfield County, although one could be hard pressed to find evidence of direct, long-term development that has emerged. The Telemark runway was in place well before the county engaged in planning. A runway on Madeline Island was built in 1949.

Now a proposal, which has received first-step approval from the Bayfield County Board, would turn 380 acres in the Town of Russell near Bayfield into a condominium and hotel complex served by a private airstrip. This airstrip and development idea, emerges in an environment with both a legacy and a currency of a planning framework. A Land Use Plan was adopted by the Bayfield County Board in 2003. Development of a Comprehensive Plan is currently underway. Both efforts should be honored as controversy swirls amidst the proposed development.

The Bayfield County Comprehensive Plan will eventually embrace nine components including; 1.) Issues and Opportunities, 2.) Housing, 3.) Transportation, 4.) Utilities and Community Facilities, 5.) Agriculture, Natural and Cultural Resources, 6.) Economic Development, 7.) Intergovernmental Cooperation, 8.) Land Use, and 9.) Implementation. These elements are stipulated by Wisconsin statute. Additional elements are permitted. Because of the predominance of Lake Superior, a chapter on Coastal Protection was included in the old Land Use Plan and should be part of a newer Comprehensive Plan.

Embedded in the Issues and Opportunities section are a whole host of considerations related to quality of life. Notwithstanding the importance of tax-base considerations, the proposed

development in Russell should be a responsive design that fits well with virtually all of the nine components.

Comprehensive planning is being done under the Department of Zoning and Planning headed by Zoning Administrator **Karl Kastrosky**. The proposed development, **Shadow Wood Landing**, seems aptly named given the murky process of creating a spot zoning agreement between the County Board and the developers, CFS-LLC, a Minnesota firm with little documented attachment to this area. The Zoning Administrator, it seems to me, should vigorously defend the integrity of the planning process. There may be constraints I don't understand, but where a proposed project has any conflict with current zoning, a reasonable response from the County should be to say; "Interesting idea, but you will have to wait for completion of the Plan. Your input will be honored by the planning group and we hope you will be an engaged participant." County Board members who support spot zoning changes, dishonor and fully misunderstand the planning process. Comprehensive planning, by Wisconsin statute, requires citizen input and intends to guide and support responsible political actions.

The response to a proposal of this type should be; "We want you to come to Bayfield County with your development ideas, AND we want you to join our community fully by acting as good citizens, respectful of neighbors and ecosystems, contributing to the entire area economically, to the quality of our schools and to the social fabric of our community."

Cooperation and collaboration are needed. Noise from planes is a concern that can be dealt with by restrictive covenants. For example, takeoffs during certain hours, say after 11 pm until 7 or 8 AM, could be prohibited. The airfield should not be private but available to general aviation; enlarging potential benefits. If the air traffic is intrusive on neighboring homes and communities, maybe it would be appropriate to look for alternative locations for the airstrip. The Pikes Creek basin ecosystem must be protected; and with commitment on the part of developers, it can be protected.

Stopping development of any kind, keeping things as they are, may motivate some participants. Financial gain may motivate others. The reality is; money talks! This development may go forward without concession to the legitimate concerns of the people in the surrounding area. By simply throwing up roadblocks, objectors take themselves out of the bargaining process. Good decisions will emerge with good information broadly disseminated. Information sharing and coordination is essential.

Developers should no longer be able to assume that just because they have a strong financial position that they can power their way past the non-economic values that are shared by people in the area. Working the back channels in secrecy may be perceived as desirable and consistent with patterns followed by successful developments in other locations. However change is emerging. Openness is honored as far more effective in successful development. Operating under cover in back channels is an old paradigm for development. Such a development strategy does not serve the situation in a contemporary society where old standards are dying along with depleted oil and unstable climate, global poverty, decaying systems of education, and health care that costs too much yet doesn't serve us healthy life-styles.

Those who make decisions and those who are impacted by decisions have every right to know what is being considered and how those considerations are expected to play out in the future. Plans, whether comprehensive or more restricted, are only effective if they are followed. When followed they tell us something about a future we want to emerge. A private enclave, a gated community, seems unlikely to be consistent with the values that have been established in the

northland. Running a slalom course with cigarette boats through the Apostle Islands ought to be a non-starter. Killing the serenity of sailing should not be negotiable. Potentially killing a kayaker is profoundly abhorrent.

Our future must emerge from collaboration; sharing, cooperation and coordination. It is important that northland values not be compromised by accession to development proposals from politically and financially powerful interests. No one should have the right to turn this beautiful area into a playpen for the irresponsibly affluent. Yet opportunity lurks. Populating a new condominium development and special home sites could be of enormous value to our area. Visitors to a luxury hotel could bring new ideas and powerful support for other development within Bayfield County. Being consistent with our values and supporting new development is not inconsistent.

Development proposals can become a part of the planning process, enabling ideas to emerge in a spirit of community involvement that will avoid or, at least reduce, the potential for conflict. **Tom Galazen** was quoted in the *Ashland Daily Press* “Our interests and the interests of the area have not been met in the decisions that have been made. Court action is expensive and time consuming for everyone, we are hoping that the county will take a look at this and re-examine and reverse the decision they made.”

Process is important and this seems like an excellent time for a whole lot of people to take a deep breath, step back, and, come Spring, sniff the sap of a Balsam Fir. Open collaboration has a chance to provide a development that fits well and serves the whole range of planning elements in the Comprehensive Plan. What will emerge will shape the future of our county. Lack of patience with the planning process is no justification for dominance of a powerful person or corporation.

Bayfield County will fly high with or without a corporate-jet-capable runway.

I don't support or oppose this proposal. Frankly, my perception is that entirely too little is known for full-bodied support or opposition.

However, it is not difficult to create scenarios.

“Cindy, this Arizona heat is unbearable. I just don't even want to go outside.”

“Yes, what should we do?”

“Don't we own a condo by Lake Superior?”

“Hmm, Yes, in Bayfield. Oh, yes, yes! Lets go there for a few days.”

“OK! I'll have our pilot get the plane ready.”

“And, John, don't forget to call the marina. It will be so cool and refreshing to buzz around those little Apostle Islands. We could even run across to Thunder Bay. Oh, this will be so much fun.”

Bruce

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Bruce Lindgren is Principal of [B.Lindgren CONSULTING](#). The consulting practice serves small business, local government, school districts and non-profits providing support for research, grant development, technical writing, marketing support and project management. Bruce brings his background in biological sciences, education, small business and media technology to generate and implement ideas contributing solutions to mission critical challenges.

In addition Bruce maintains many affiliations including: [Bayfield County Economic Development Corporation](#), (BCEDC) Director, [IDEA Consortium LLC](#), Owner, [Inland Sea Society](#), (ISS) Director, [Lake Superior Binational Forum](#), (LSBF) US Co-Chair, [Northwest Wisconsin Workforce Investment Board](#), (WIB) Member, [Raindrop Garden Gallery](#), (RGG) Co-owner

The encircled fractal triangle represents an integrated cluster of seven ideas – economics, ecology, equity, ethics, experience, education and energy – that may be considered a core for sustainability studies. Bruce is available to present illustrated lectures and facilitate discussions about role of education in Industrial Ecology, Sustainable Development and the Sustainability Revolution.