



City of Mora
Kanabec County, Minnesota
Meeting Agenda
Planning Commission

Mora City Hall
101 Lake Street S
Mora, MN 55051

Monday, November 9, 2020

5:30 PM

Mora City Hall

City of Mora Code of Ordinances, Chapter 32: The role of the Planning Commission is to serve the City Council in an advisory capacity on matters relating to citizen requests for action, zoning changes and review, Comprehensive Plan reviews, capital improvement reviews, and other actions as deemed necessary to carry out the functions of a pro-active Planning Commission.

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call: Chad Gramentz, Mike Johnson, Todd Sjoberg and Sara Treiber.

3. Adopt Agenda *(No item of business shall be considered unless it appears on the agenda for the meeting. Board members may add items to the agenda prior to adoption of the agenda.)*

4. Approval of Minutes

- a. September 2, 2020 Meeting
- b. October 20, 2020 Work Session

5. Public Hearings

None

6. Open Forum

7. New Business

- a. 2021 Meeting Schedule. The Planning Commission will adopt a meeting schedule for the coming year.

8. Old Business

- a. Floodplain Management Ordinance – Proposed Flood Prone District. The Planning Commission will recap the September 30th open house, review written correspondence received from property owners of land proposed to be designated as flood prone, and hear from property owners wishing to speak directly to the commission regarding the proposed Flood Prone District.

9. Verbal Reports *(Commissioners and staff will be given the opportunity to share information.)*

- a. NorthStar RE LLC – 1200 North Industrial Road
- b. Commission Vacancy and Expiring Terms
- c. Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting – November 19, 2020, 2:30-4:30 PM

10. Adjournment

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 7, 2020 at 5:30 PM.

**City of Mora, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes**

September 2, 2020

Present: Mike Johnson, Todd Sjoberg and Sara Treiber
Absent: Chad Gramentz
Staff Present: Community Development Director Beth Thorp
Others Present: Gina Vraa, Cody Evenson and Steve Ayde

1. Call to Order. Chair Sjoberg called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.
2. Roll Call.
 - Gramentz – Absent (unexcused)
 - Johnson – Present
 - Sjoberg – Present
 - Treiber – Present
3. Adopt Agenda. Motion by Treiber, second by Johnson to adopt the September 2, 2020 agenda as presented. All present voted aye, motion carried.
4. Approval of Minutes. Motion by Johnson, second by Treiber to approve the August 10, 2020 meeting minutes as presented. All present voted aye, motion carried. Motion by Treiber, second by Johnson to approve the August 20, 2020 work session meeting minutes as presented. All present voted aye, motion carried.
5. Public Hearings.
 - a. Permanent Zoning Classifications and Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations for Annexed Land. Thorp introduced the City of Mora’s request to establish permanent zoning classifications and Comprehensive Plan land use designations for several parcels annexed into the city in 2006 and 2007, explaining that the majority of land is owned by the City of Mora along with two parcels owned by Haythem Soussi and one parcel owned by Jeremy Japp. Soussi and Japp provided their zoning and land use preferences to staff and those preferences were incorporated into staff’s recommendation. Thorp briefly explained that zoning classifications and land use designations are most typically established at the time of annexation, but it can be done at a later time; this request was brought forward after Soussi expressed interest in developing his land. Thorp explained that Soussi would like to construct a single family home on his smaller parcel at some point in the future and construct a storage building on his larger parcel presently; Soussi requested and staff recommended permanent zoning classifications of R-4 Low Density Residential District and I-1 Limited Industrial District respectively. Japp intends to continue using his property for single family residential purposes for the time being; Japp requested and staff recommended a permanent zoning classification of R-4 Low Density Residential District. Thorp stated that staff is recommending a permanent zoning classification of I-1 Limited Industrial District for all of the city-owned airport land. Thorp then discussed Comprehensive Plan land use designations, recommending that the city-owned airport land be guided as Public / Semi-Public / Institutional, Soussi’s smaller parcel be guided as Low Density Residential and larger parcel be guided as Industrial, and Japp’s parcel be guided as Low Density Residential. Thorp stated that she received two phone calls from the public

prior to the public hearing; neither caller had concerns with the request but wanted to confirm that their properties were not included in the request. Staff presented the commission with a resolution for consideration, listing the interim zoning classification, recommended permanent zoning classification, current Comprehensive Plan land use designation and recommended Comprehensive Plan land use designation for each parcel included in the request. Sjoberg opened the public hearing at 5:36 pm. Gina Vraa, 2148 Highway 65, was present and explained that she lives immediately south of the Japp property and asked if the use of Japp's property was going to have any impact on her property. Sjoberg explained that the use of the subject properties will not be changing, that this request is to establish permanent zoning classifications and impacts will be seen with future development. Steve Ayde, 2148 Highway 65, asked if this request impacted the zoning of Vraa's land. Thorp asked Vraa to identify her property on a map, explaining to Vraa that her property is located in Arthur Township and the city has no jurisdiction over her land. Ayde asked why the city boundary goes around Vraa's property but does not include it. Thorp explained that the city purchased several parcels for airport expansion purposes, but only purchased those parcels needed for the project. Ayde asked if the airport is owned by the city; Thorp confirmed that it is a city-owned airport. Vraa then asked the commission why Highway 65 hasn't been expanded to four lanes; commissioners explained that the highway is within MnDOT's jurisdiction. Vraa expressed frustration with the amount of vehicles traveling on Highway 65. With no further comments from the public, Sjoberg closed the public hearing at 5:38 pm. Motion by Johnson, second by Treiber to adopt Resolution No. PC2020-901, a resolution recommending permanent zoning classifications and Comprehensive Plan land use designations for land annexed into the City of Mora from the Town of Arthur, as presented. All present voted aye, motion carried.

- b. Text Amendment to Regulate Electric Vehicle Charging Stations. Thorp stated that the city is proposing a text amendment to regulate electric vehicle charging stations (EVCS) with plans to install two chargers downtown and one charger on the Coborn's property. Thorp explained that the proposed language is based on language used by other communities and it had already been reviewed by the City Attorney. Thorp stated that the proposed language is minimal but that it will assist the city with consistent installation, use and enforcement of EVCS. Sjoberg asked who will own the three proposed EVCS; Thorp stated that they will be owned and operated by Mora Municipal Utilities. Treiber added that the Public Utilities Commission coordinated with Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency (SMMPA) on this project. Johnson asked Treiber if the Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe has any EVCS at its casinos; Treiber was unsure. Sjoberg asked how users of EVCS pay for the service; Johnson stated that many EVCS accept credit cards and Thorp commented that some owners/communities may choose not to charge for service as a way to create demand. Thorp stated that she did not receive any comments or inquiries from the public prior to the public hearing in regard to this request. Treiber commented that she appreciated the brevity of the proposed regulations. Sjoberg opened the public hearing at 5:40 pm. With no members of the public present for the public hearing, Sjoberg closed the public hearing at 5:40 pm. Motion by Treiber, second by Johnson to adopt Resolution No. PC2020-902, a resolution recommending approval of a text amendment to the City of Mora Code of Ordinances, Title XV Land Usage, Chapter 150 Zoning Code pertaining to the regulation of electric vehicle charging stations, as presented. All present voted aye, motion carried.

6. Open Forum. No members of the public were present for open forum.

7. New Business. None.

8. Old Business.

- a. Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map. Thorp stated that this item was a continuation of the Planning Commission’s August 10th discussion, explaining that staff identified several suggested changes to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map as part of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update. Thorp provided detail about each of the suggested changes and the Planning Commission provided direction as follows:

Item	Property Owner or Location	Suggested Change (SC) + Planning Commission Direction (D)
1	Welia Health (Kanabec County)	SC: Update the map to include all Welia Health properties as Public / Semi-Public / Institutional D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change</i>
2	Dala Place (Janice Parker)	SC: Realign current land use designations to correspond with current zoning boundaries D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change</i>
3	SW corner of Howe Ave + Walnut St (Amsden, Fietek, and Harer)	SC: Change from Low Density Residential to Residential / Commercial Transition based on current zoning and surrounding land use designations D: <i>Consensus to change this area to High Density Residential based on proximity to Highways 65 + 23 and commercial uses</i>
4	SW corner of Howe Ave + Oslin Rd (Hohn and Minmor LLC)	SC: Change from Residential / Commercial Transition to Commercial / Light Industrial based on current zoning, current uses, and likely future development D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change</i>
5	Kanabec County Jail block (Generation Church, Cole, and Kanabec County’s land listed for sale)	SC: The whole block is shown as Public / Semi-Public / Institutional; however, not all properties on this block are publicly owned. Change the three Forest Ave properties from Public / Semi-Public / Institutional to Residential / Commercial based on current zoning and surrounding land use designations D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change</i>
6	North of North Industrial Rd + east of Hwy 65 (Elvik, Paulson, Jabas, Rysdam, Carlson, and Caswell)	SC: Clean up Commercial land use designation boundary to follow property boundaries D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change</i>
7	Airport Area (City of Mora and Soussi)	SC: Proposed changes currently being considered by Planning Commission and City Council; proposed changes are shown on the map D: <i>Consensus to support the suggested change based on Resolution No. PC2020-901</i>
8	SW corner of Hwy 65 + 9 th St (Kelling)	SC: Change from Low Density Residential to Medium or High Density Residential based on location, surrounding uses, and likely future development D: <i>Consensus to change this area to Medium Density Residential based on surrounding uses, proximity to Highway 65 and likely future development</i>
9	Kanabec County Historical Society	SC: Should this property be designated as Public / Semi-Public / Institutional? Thinking long-term, does the city want to see this property developed as Low Density Residential based on current zoning and surrounding land use designations? D: <i>Consensus to change this area to Low Density Residential based on surrounding uses and proximity to the river</i>
10	North side of Maple Ave, south of Lake Mora, east of Library Park, and west of Hwy 65 (multiple property owners / sites, including library, high school, homes, and businesses)	SC: Change from Commercial and Public / Semi-Public / Institutional to Residential / Commercial Transition based on current zoning, current uses, and likely future redevelopment

		<i>D: Consensus to change this area to Residential / Commercial transition based on current uses, likely and unknown future uses, and proximity to Highway 65</i>
11	Fox Run 2 nd Addition and Lake Park Addition (City of Mora)	<p>SC: The state conveyed tax forfeit land to the city in 2019 for park purposes; statute requires that these properties be designated as Park or Open Space in the Comprehensive Plan; Lake Park Addition properties are already designated as Park or Open Space in the 2009 Land Use</p> <p><i>D: Consensus to support the suggested change based on the state's requirement that these properties be guided as Park or Open Space</i></p>

There were no other suggested changes provided by commissioners. Thorp stated that she will incorporate changes, based on direction provided by the commission, into the draft Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map, and reach out to impacted private property owners to discuss the possible changes.

9. Verbal Reports.

- a. NorthStar RE LLC. Thorp stated that Derek Carlson, owner of the proposed pontoon manufacturing facility located at 1200 North Industrial Road, is making slow progress on the removal of excess dirt from the industrial park site. Thorp read an update provided by Carlson on August 27th stating that the remaining dirt – approximately 10 yards – will be used for grading the site and On Site Solutions will begin grading the site during the week of September 7th; On Site Solutions will be fixing the erosion issues with the retention pond and completing final grade with erosion control. Thorp reminded the commission that the deadline for grading and landscaping was September 1st, and added that Carlson is continuing to work to achieve the conditions of his Conditional Use Permit. Commissioners acknowledged that progress is being made.
- b. Floodplain Management Ordinance Open House – Wednesday, September 30, 2020, 5:00 – 7:00 pm. Thorp reminded commissioners of the upcoming open house and stated that notices were mailed to the 86 property owners impacted by the proposed Flood Prone District on Friday, August 28th. Thorp stated that she had received three phone calls on Monday, August 31st in response to the notice, with no other contact between August 31st and the commission's September 2nd meeting. Sjoberg and Johnson commented that the notice was well-written. Thorp spoke specifically about one of the three calls, from a property owner on Riverside Street, and the property owner's concerns about the flood prone designation. The property owner stated that she has experienced flooding in her yard – away from her house – but felt that the designation was unfair and would have a negative impact on her property value. Thorp stated that she felt the occasional flooding warranted the property being identified as flood prone. Commissioners discussed the property owner's concern about her property value and the importance of identifying flood prone properties. Thorp raised the issue of the proposed City of Mora Flood Prone Areas Map showing, in some cases, portions of properties as being flood prone rather than the entire property; Thorp added that she has been informing property owners that the proposed flood prone language will only apply to the portions of properties identified as being flood prone and not the entire property and requested confirmation from the commission that this is their intent. The consensus of the commission was that the proposed language will only apply to those areas identified on the map, and also acknowledged that most lending institutions will require flood insurance if any portion of the property is located within a flood district. Commissioners discussed flood insurance and the related scale of premiums. Commissioners acknowledged that there may be an impact to property owners with land identified as flood

prone and that they may receive negative feedback from property owners regarding flood insurance; however, the commission maintained support for the proposed flood prone language and mapping. Thorp encouraged all commissioners to attend the September 30th open house, adding that she'll have copies of the proposed City of Mora Flood Prone Areas Map and draft Floodplain Management Ordinance available for attendees. Treiber suggested sending a reminder of the open house to property owners and stressed the importance of providing visuals at the event. Sjoberg offered to provide flood insurance information for open house attendees.

- c. Comprehensive Plan Work Session – Thursday, October 20, 2020, 5:00 – 6:00 pm. Thorp reminded commissioners that the City Council and Planning Commission will have a work session on Tuesday, October 20, 2020. Hometown Planning will present a draft document and staff will present the draft Land Use Map.

10. Adjournment. Motion by Johnson, second by Treiber to adjourn. All present voted aye, motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 pm.

Todd Sjoberg
Chair

ATTEST: _____

Beth Thorp
Community Development Director

**City of Mora, MN
PLANNING COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes**

**October 20, 2020
Joint Work Session with the City Council**

Present: Mike Johnson, Todd Sjoberg and Sara Treiber
Absent: Chad Gramentz
City Council Present: Jody Anderson, Jake Mathison, Sam Pioske, Alan Skramstad and Sara Treiber
Staff Present: Community Development Director Beth Thorp, City Administrator Lindy Crawford and Deputy Clerk Mandi Yoder
Others Present: Ben Oleson

1. Call to Order. Chair Sjoberg called the Planning Commission portion of the meeting to order at 5:02 pm.
2. Roll Call.
 - Gramentz – Absent (unexcused)
 - Johnson – Present
 - Sjoberg – Present
 - Treiber – Present
3. Planning Commission Joint Work Session – Comprehensive Plan Update Review. Thorp reviewed the Planning Commission’s and City Council’s August 20, 2020 joint work session, noting that the boards met with Comprehensive Plan consultant Ben Oleson of Hometown Planning to review a summary of Comprehensive Plan Committee activity, review community survey results, and provide Oleson with direction for preparation of a draft Comprehensive Plan update. Thorp stated that the purpose of the October 20, 2020 work session was to review Oleson’s first draft and to provide input on community assets. At the request of Chair Sjoberg, Oleson provided a page-by-page review of the draft Comprehensive Plan update. Specific items of discussion included:
 - Vision Statement – The Planning Commission discussed development of an updated vision statement at its March 2019 meeting and provided direction to the Comprehensive Plan Committee for this task. Thorp stated that the committee will discuss the vision statement at its next meeting.
 - Population Trends – Oleson highlighted current and historical population trends, noting that Mora’s growth was at its peak in the 1940s and 1950s but slowed significantly in the past decade.
 - Population Projections – Oleson stated that at the time of the last Comprehensive Plan the state demographer was regularly providing population projections for cities and townships; however, that is no longer the case. Oleson asked the boards if they wish to continue providing projections or remove projections from the plan. The consensus of the Commission and Council was to remove population projections (draft Tables 3 and 6) from the plan.
 - Age Group Comparisons – The draft plan included a table of historical age group comparisons within the city; Oleson asked the group if it might be more useful to show this information in a graph, a table, or both. Treiber suggested minimizing the age groups – shown in the draft plan with five year increments – to something more like stages of life (school age, working adults, seniors, etc.) to make the information easier to read and potentially more useful for setting policies and procedures.

- Education Attainment – Oleson commented that the number of Mora students graduating from high school has steadily increased from 52% in 1970 to 91% in 2018, in line with statewide increases. The group discussed the value of high school graduation statistics. Oleson also commented that the number of Mora students graduating with a bachelor’s degree or higher was 17% in 2018 compared to 35% statewide, a more significant difference than that of high school graduation rates. Commission and council members discussed the usefulness of education attainment information as it pertains to employers and potential new businesses.
- Travel Time to Work – Oleson commented that the average commuting time for Mora residents has slightly decreased from 23.5 minutes in 2000 to 18.8 minutes in 2018. Oleson provided a table showing the actual breakdown of commuting times in time increments beginning at less than five minutes through 90 or more minutes, commenting that the prime commuting times appeared to be 5-9 minutes, 30-34 minutes, and 60-89 minutes. The group discussed most likely commuting destinations, including Pine City, Cambridge, Princeton, Hinckley, Blaine, and St. Cloud. Anderson commented that the information did not account for people working from home; Oleson will look into how the state accounts for non-commuters. Oleson asked if the commission and council found value in including travel times for other Kanabec County cities; the consensus was to remove information for other communities or at least generalize.
- Unemployment Rates – Oleson provided updated unemployment rates. The group briefly discussed historical fluctuations and impacting factors; Oleson commented that Kanabec County unemployment rates appeared to follow state and national trends.
- Household Income – Oleson pointed out that the 2009 Comprehensive Plan provided both family and household median incomes, and he proposed eliminating the family income portion due to difficulty in obtaining the information as well as his belief that it’s less useful than household income. Commission and council members reviewed the definitions for both family and household incomes and discussed the differences. Crawford suggested that it may be more useful to include comparisons to cities of similar size and economic conditions within the region – such as Ogilvie, Cambridge, Milaca, Pine City, Rush City, and Hinckley – rather than other Kanabec County cities. Commission and council members agreed that a comparison to other communities within the region would be more useful than a comparison to other Kanabec County cities.
- Average Weekly Wages by Industry – Oleson provided updated weekly wage averages for several industries as well as additional information (number of establishments and total annual wages) that was not included in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan. Treiber commented that the information was extremely useful. Oleson commented that the largest number of employees are found in the Education and Health Services category; commission and council members discussed the vast difference in jobs and wages that could be included in that one category, suggesting that the category be broken down to separate education from health services. Oleson suggested that the average weekly wage information could be used for such things as determining rental housing rates.
- Kanabec County Housing Trends – The draft table included information for all Kanabec County townships and cities; the consensus was to limit the information to only those townships adjacent to the city and/or other cities within the region similar to Mora (listed above).
- Mora Housing – Oleson commented that the number of housing units in Mora increased by 83 from 2000 to 2018, with the number of rental units increasing faster than owner-occupied units. Crawford suggested including information about state trends relating to the number of rental units versus owner-occupied units. Treiber commented that the shift to more rental units is likely a direct effect of the recession; Anderson added that she believes many foreclosed homes were purchased during the recession for the purpose of creating rental units.

- Mora Building Permits – Thorp stated that city staff will update Table 17 to include building permit data from 2009 to present. Oleson commented that this information will also likely demonstrate the increasing difference between rental and owner-occupied units.
- Structures Built – Oleson shared that the 2009 Comprehensive Plan included a historical analysis of the number of housing units existing in 2000 broken down by decade of construction; Oleson provided 2018 numbers for comparison purposes. Commission and council members discussed the value of this information; Oleson stated that it provides information about the age of the existing housing stock and provides insight on the amount of remodeling or redevelopment that may be needed.
- With time running low, Oleson suggested that commission and council members review the remaining portion of the draft plan and provide any additional comments to him or Thorp. Treiber suggested that Oleson convert tables to graphs, where appropriate, to better convey the information.
- Assumptions – Oleson stated that he did a lot of work to update the 2009 assumptions based on Comprehensive Plan Committee discussions, and encouraged commission and council members to provide feedback if there were concerns with the updated assumptions. Treiber commented on a reference made to “sprawling large-lot neighborhoods”; the group discussed the likely meaning behind this reference and general trend toward smaller lots.
- Goals and Policies – Oleson provided updated goals and policies using the same categories that were included in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, such as Parks and Open Space, Business and Industry, Housing, etc. Treiber asked if the Comprehensive Plan Committee helped develop the draft goals and policies; Oleson commented that the committee’s broad discussions helped him to draft the updated goals and policies. Thorp added that the committee will be meeting within a few weeks to complete a review of the draft plan. Treiber commented that the goals and policies appeared to be broad statements; Oleson shared that the intent of the goals and policies are to provide broad statements, not too specific, to provide generalizations about what the city wants to accomplish or challenges that need to be addressed. Oleson spoke specifically about a 2009 policy to “not stand in the way of a big-box type retailer from locating in Mora” and his proposed amendment to be more inclusive of all business types including big-box. Commissioners and council members offered support for Oleson’s amendment. In regard to Land Use Thorp shared that the Planning Commission has been working on an update of the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map for the past couple of months. Oleson stated that the committee’s discussions tended to focus on housing, transportation, connecting the city’s two commercial districts, and safely crossing Highway 65; and, added that he attempted to encompass all of those concerns in the updated goals and policies section. Pioske suggested promoting the new high school or new school facilities under Quality of Life as a way to attract residents and businesses. Thorp expressed concern about the proposed deletion of the goal and policy directly related to senior living developments and services, sharing that this was intentionally included in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan to assist the HRA of Mora seek funding for senior projects; Oleson stated that the goal and policy is still included in the draft plan but was moved from Quality of Life to Housing.
- Mora Housing Projections and Land Needs to Accommodate Residential Growth – Oleson provided an updated table to demonstrate land needs based on various growth scenarios (i.e. slower growth, moderate growth, fast growth, etc.). Oleson inquired if the reference to 10,000 square foot lots matched the zoning code; Thorp stated that 10,000 square feet is the minimum lot size for the R-1 Single Family Residential District; however, the current trend is for smaller lots but the Planning Commission has not yet discussed a change to the minimum lot size. The consensus of the group was that proposed changes to Table 22 were very useful for long-range planning purposes. Oleson shared that he attempted to provide an estimate of vacant land within the city that can be used to accommodate future development and asked if the city had

more accurate information; Thorp suggested that she may be able to assist with providing such estimates. The group discussed and agreed to use the terms “Central Business District” and “General Business District” rather than “Downtown Business District” and “Highway Business District” as was used in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan; Thorp added that “Central” and “General” align with the zoning code.

- City of Mora Recreational Site Inventory – Anderson commented that Table 32, the recreational site inventory, was no longer current and asked if it would be updated; Thorp stated that staff will be updating the inventory. Crawford asked if a new trail plan will be included in the update; Thorp responded that the trail plan will be updated.
- Community Assets – Oleson provided a sample page to graphically illustrate how community assets could be promoted within the plan, and asked the group to provide additional ideas about community assets. Oleson commented that it may be better to merge the recreational sites inventory and community assets section. Oleson added that the intent of the community assets section is to use it as promotional material for the community.
- Utilities – Crawford stated that city and utility staff will need to update the information contained in the Community Facilities and Public Services Plan.

Oleson and Thorp shared that they are in the process of scheduling the next Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting and, once the committee has provided feedback on the first draft, Oleson will prepare a second draft for review.

4. Adjournment. Motion by Treiber, second by Johnson to adjourn. All present voted aye, motion carried and the Planning Commission portion of the meeting was adjourned at 6:06 pm.

Todd Sjoberg
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Beth Thorp
Community Development Director



City of Mora Planning Commission

2021 Meeting Schedule

Meetings will be held at 5:30 pm on the Monday before the second Tuesday of each month unless otherwise specified with an asterisk.

Application Deadline Fridays unless otherwise specified	Meeting Date Mondays unless otherwise specified
December 18, 2020	January 11
January 15	February 8
February 12	March 8
March 19	April 12
April 16	May 10
May 14	June 7
June 18	July 12
July 16	August 9
August 20	September 13
September 13* (Monday)	October 6* (first Wednesday due to holiday)
October 15	November 8
November 19	December 13



MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission
 FROM: Beth Thorp, Community Development Director
 SUBJECT: Floodplain Management Ordinance – Proposed Flood Prone District
 DATE: November 9, 2020

SUMMARY

The Planning Commission will recap the September 30th Floodplain Management Ordinance open house, review written correspondence received from property owners of land proposed to be designated as flood prone, and hear from property owners wishing to speak directly to the commission regarding the proposed Flood Prone District.

Written correspondence has been received from three property owners:

- Robin Saari, 704 Fair Oaks Drive
- Doris Armstrong, 236 Wood Street S.
- Joel & Michelle Ostrom, 2034 Highway 23

Property owners speaking at the November 9th Planning Commission meeting (those known as of November 6th):

- Joel & Michelle Ostrom, 2034 Highway 23

DISCUSSION

The Planning Commission has been working on an update of the city's Floodplain Management Ordinance since 2019. While the draft document is largely based on the DNR's model ordinance, the commission developed language and mapping which goes above and beyond the DNR's model to address local conditions and properties susceptible to flooding. These properties are considered "flood prone" and the draft Floodplain Management Ordinance includes the creation of a Flood Prone District and City of Mora Flood Prone Areas Map. The proposed Flood Prone Areas Map, by consensus of the commission, includes:

- Land identified on the National Wetland Inventory (maintained by US Fish & Wildlife Service);
- Parcels with documented flooding in 2016 and 2018 (as reported by property owners);
- Parcels / areas identified in AE2S' 2019 Regional Drainage Analysis; and,
- Parcels identified as being flood prone based on historical knowledge.

Some parcels are included in a single category while others are included in multiple categories. Likewise, several parcels that are identified as being flood prone – typically those parcels adjacent to the Snake River and Lake Mora which are identified on the National Wetland Inventory and/or those that are identified as being flood prone based on historical knowledge – are already identified as being in a flood district per the 1977 Flood Insurance Rate Map.

The Planning Commission held an open house on September 30th in order to meet with property owners directly impacted by the proposed Flood Prone District. Approximately 167 open house notices were mailed and the event register shows that 11 property owners attended (although not all property owners may have signed in). Following the open house an additional 238 notices of the proposed Flood Prone District were mailed to impacted property owners. While not all property owners were notified of the open house, all property owners were given the option of speaking with city staff and/or scheduling individual meetings with staff. Staff was contacted by 37 property owners – some owning multiple flood prone properties – between August 31st and November 5th; staff met with five of these property owners. Most property owners that contacted staff were seeking more information about the intent of the Flood Prone District and why their property was included on the map. The most common concerns were about the possible need for flood insurance and the impact of a flood prone designation on property value.

The Planning Commission may wish to recap the open house by sharing details of individual conversations with impacted property owners and general thoughts about the event. In addition, the commission should review the written correspondence received from property owners and hear from property owners wishing to speak directly to the commission.

For the commission's reference, the three property owners who submitted written correspondence have properties that have been included on the proposed Flood Prone Areas Map for the following reasons:

- Robin Saari, 704 Fair Oaks Drive – Flooded Parcel 2018 (Documented Flooding)
- Doris Armstrong, 236 Wood Street S. – AE2S 100-Year Flooding (AE2S Regional Drainage Analysis)
- Joel & Michelle Ostrom, 2034 Highway 23 – Mapped Wetlands (National Wetland Inventory)

In response to the letter provided by Joel & Michelle Ostrom, staff exchanged emails with State Floodplain Manager Ceil Strauss on November 4th followed by a phone conversation on November 5th. Strauss indicated that she did not entirely agree with Ostroms' account of their conversation and stated that she / the DNR does in fact support the Planning Commission's decision to include wetlands on the proposed Flood Prone Areas Map. Strauss intends to provide a written response to the Ostroms and copy the city on that response. Staff will provide the response at the November 9th Planning Commission meeting, if received.

The Floodplain Ordinance adoption process includes the following steps (currently on step 4):

1. Planning Commission reviews existing and model ordinances, and develops proposed ordinance for adoption.
2. Proposed ordinance is presented to the City Council for review and comment. *(The proposed ordinance may be sent back to Planning Commission for further work or the process could move forward to the next step.)*
3. Send final draft of the proposed ordinance to the DNR for conditional approval.
4. **Planning Commission conducts a public hearing, making a recommendation for the City Council's consideration.**
5. City Council reviews proposed ordinance and votes on adoption of ordinance.
6. A summary of the adopted ordinance is published in the local newspaper, making it effective.
7. The adopted ordinance, proof of publication, and required checklist is submitted to the DNR. The DNR then forwards the information to FEMA with the DNR's recommendation.

In order to move the project forward the Planning Commission should determine what modifications, if any, should be made to the draft Floodplain Management Ordinance and City of Mora Flood Prone

Areas Map and consider when to schedule the required public hearing. Staff believes there are minor changes that can be made to improve the document and map (to be discussed at the meeting), but generally feels that it's time to select a public hearing date. For the commission's consideration, the next two regular meeting dates are Monday, December 7th and Monday, January 11th.

To view the current and draft Floodplain Management Ordinance documents, visit the city's website at www.ci.mora.mn.us and use the links provided on the homepage. Staff will provide copies of the proposed City of Mora Flood Prone Areas Map for reference at the November 9th meeting.

ACTION REQUESTED

- Recap the September 30th open house.
- Review written correspondence received from impacted property owners.
- Hear from property owners wishing to speak directly to the commission.
- Provide staff with direction for moving the project forward.

ATTACHMENTS

Correspondence from Robin Saari dated September 17, 2020

Correspondence from Doris Armstrong dated received September 23, 2020

Correspondence from Joel & Michelle Ostrom dated October 30, 2020

9/17/20

Mora Planning Commission
Mora Municipal Utilities
101 Lake Street South
Mora, MN 55051-1588
Attn: Community Development Director
Beth Thorp

Dear Ms. Thorp

This follows today's conversation. I am not able to make it to the open house because I work afternoons. As we discussed, I do not believe my house should be considered Flood Prone. The problem with the water coming in my basement was diagnosed as landscaping that had settled around the egress windows in my back yard. Once this was corrected with additional fill and landscape covering in 2018, I have had no further problems. I will be glad to show anyone interested what was done to correct the problem.

Thank you



Robin Saari
704 Fair Oaks Drive
Mora, MN 55051
320-232-5829

BT SEP 23 2020

Our family has owned 236 S. Wood St. since 1985 with never a flooded basement. No problems until Wood St. was redone 5-6 years ago. The street is not right at Wald + Jersey - goes uphill by stop sign. Since then, it has cost \$4000 to fix furnace, H₂O heater, add a sump pump and no one to pay, but me, a senior on fixed income! H₂O damage not accounted for to garage. My whole yard is waterlogged at times - I have photos - house + garage. Never even needed a pump before!

So, your fix is to put one in a flood plain? I know of several people moving because of city ant problems.

Thank you.

Becci Armstrong

Writing bad / arthritis

October 30, 2020

Dear Planning Commission,

Thank you for your service and for your communication in distributing the Floodplain Management Ordinance Update.

I understand that the Mora area has been hit hard with flooding lately and that developing a plan to make recommendations and communicate risk to property owners is in the best interest of the city, and community. Thank you for taking on this challenge and at this point, limiting it to recommendations rather than mandates.

We received the Floodplain Management Ordinance Update **“because property (we) own has been identified by the city as being flood prone.”** My purpose is two-fold.

1. First, to present explanation backed by documentation to reveal at least one flaw in the rationale and mythology utilized in the creation of the new “flood prone” maps and policy.
2. And secondly, to appeal to the Planning Commission, to provide opportunity for property owners to opt out of this Ordinance by providing documentation showing that the property does not apply to the stated intent of the Ordinance, or to the definitions of “flood hazard”, or “Flood Prone”.
 - a. Furthermore, that this ability to opt out would be an option for all property owners BEFORE ADOPTING as well as after the adoption of the Floodplain Management Ordinance.

The September 11 Update states that the “proposed City of Mora Flood Prone Areas Map includes:

- A. Land identified on the National Wetland Inventory**
- B. Parcels with documented flooding in 2016 and 2018
- C. Parcels / areas identified in AE2S’ 2019 Drainage Analysis; and,
- D. Parcels identified as being flood prone based on historical knowledge

Our property is included in this Ordinance solely because it contains an extremely small area (.17 Acre of an 8.36 Acre lot) identified on the National Wetland Inventory (A). It does not meet or intersect with the other criteria (B, C, or D above) used by the Planning Commission in the creation of the Flood Prone Map.

Exhibit A – Ostrom Property Beacon (Credit Beth Thorp)

Exhibit B – National Wetland Inventory (Credit Beth Thorp)

This property is at the crest of obvious hill. At the top of the hill on one corner of this large plot is a small low spot best described as a mud puddle. This isolated “wetland” on our property temporarily holds water after significant rains. This property has never flooded, and could never be in danger of flooding since it is at the top of a hill.

Exhibit C – NWI Wetland Finder Relief Map - Provided by Craig Wills MN DNR Cambridge Office

Exhibit D – Picture of Isolated Wetland

According to Ceil Strauss, the MN Floodplain Manager, the MN State Minimal requirement for the local Floodplain Ordinance only required to include FEMA identified high risk areas.

2034 Hwy 23 is not in a FEMA high risk area.

In search of FEMA Floodplain criteria, Deanna Pomije at Kanabec Soil and Water Conservation District sent me to Teresa Wickeham who was very helpful to pull the old FEMA Maps and explain that these old maps classify land in one of four zones.

Zone A – 100 Year Flood

Zone B – 100 – 500 Year Flood

Zone C – Minimal Flooding

Zone D – Undetermined

If your property were to be classified into one of these Zones, which Zone would you most desire to associate with? I think it is obvious that of these Zones, C is the most desirable. Our property is classified Zone C.

Teresa was helpful to explain that these zones are determined by elevation. She explained that Ann River Bridge elevation is 950ft. and the elevation at our property near the isolated wetland is between 1020 and 1010 ft. Ms. Wickeham went on to say, “Wetlands have nothing to do with Flood Zones.”

Matthew Bauman of the State DNR working directly with the City of Mora shed additional insight. He too said that the minimal requirement for the Federal and State Floodplain Ordinance is the Official FEMA map. He went on to explain that the Mora Planning Commission hired a consultant to analyze the flooding situation and has pulled in additional data sources and analyzed the drainage simulation at a more strict threshold than required by the State and Federal standards.

Considering the recent flooding and significant disturbances that have resulted in the city of Mora, I applaud the Planning Commissions desire to update and address this pertinent issue. Furthermore, it is understandable that the Mora Planning Commission and the consultant they hired would desire a more complete and accurate picture than the old 1972 FEMA maps that are currently available. All things considered, I think the consultant and Planning Commission have done a good job addressing this complex and difficult issue.

That said, there is danger in utilizing additional data sources intended for other purposes. In this case utilizing the DNR’s National Wetland Inventory includes Isolated Wetlands that are completely independent of the flooding this Ordinance is attempting to address.

After understanding that the **Mora Planning Commission’s Floodplain Ordinance exceeds FEMA’s Floodplain criteria, and the Minimal State requirements to be included in a Floodplain** I agree with Teresa Wickeham when she said, “Wetlands have nothing to do with Flood Zones.” And I concur with the State Floodplain Manager, Ceil Strauss when she said of the Mora Planning Commission, “they may have over reached and caused undue concern.”

I have clearly presented that 2034 Hwy 23 has the most desirable FEMA rating possible, that this property is only included in the proposed Floodplain Management Ordinance because of a unrelated, outlying, Isolated Wetland, and that the Isolated Wetland in question is a good 60 to 70 feet in elevation higher than the flooding at Ann River. Given these facts, I trust you can understand the error in classifying our property as being "flood prone". It is obvious that this plot of land is not a "flood hazard area" and certainly should **not be categorized or regulated** in the same way as with the city's truly flood prone areas.

Please carefully consider the consequences of automatically defining all land currently included in the "National Wetland Inventory" in the same category as the documented flooding of 2016 and 2018. I propose that **Proactively exempting property that does not fit your stated criteria and purpose could prevent expensive legal battles and enormous amount of hassle, time and wasted resources in the future.**

So I close with the same request.

Please provide opportunity for property owners to opt out of this Ordinance by providing documentation showing that the property does not conform to the stated intent of the "Flood Prone District". Allow owners to opt out either before the ADOPTION or at any point after the adoption of the Floodplain Management Ordinance.

Thank you for considering our plea for accurate and fair treatment of our personal property.

Sincerely,

Joel and Michelle Ostrom
Re: 2034 Hwy 23, Mora, MN
320-679-4869

PS. Any attempt to try to direct this debate away from these facts onto whether this really affects property owners in any significant way, is another whole debate and maybe necessary to expound on if a reasonable preadoption opt out option is not granted by the commission.

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SEEDING

22.08280.00

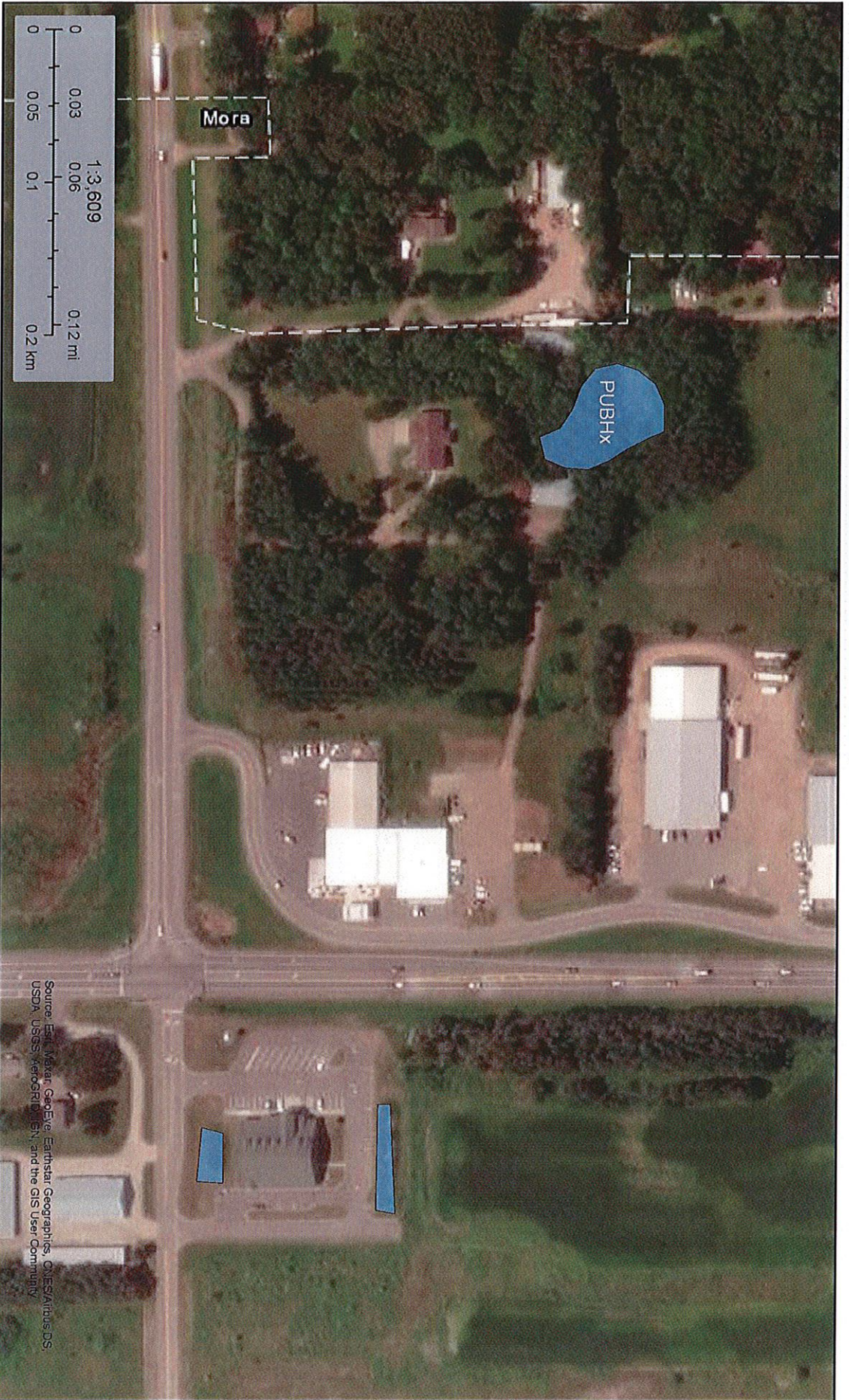
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September 23, 2020

Wetlands

-  Estuarine and Marine Deepwater
-  Estuarine and Marine Wetland

-  Freshwater Emergent Wetland
-  Freshwater Forested/Shrub Wetland
-  Freshwater Pond
-  Lake
-  Other
-  Riverine

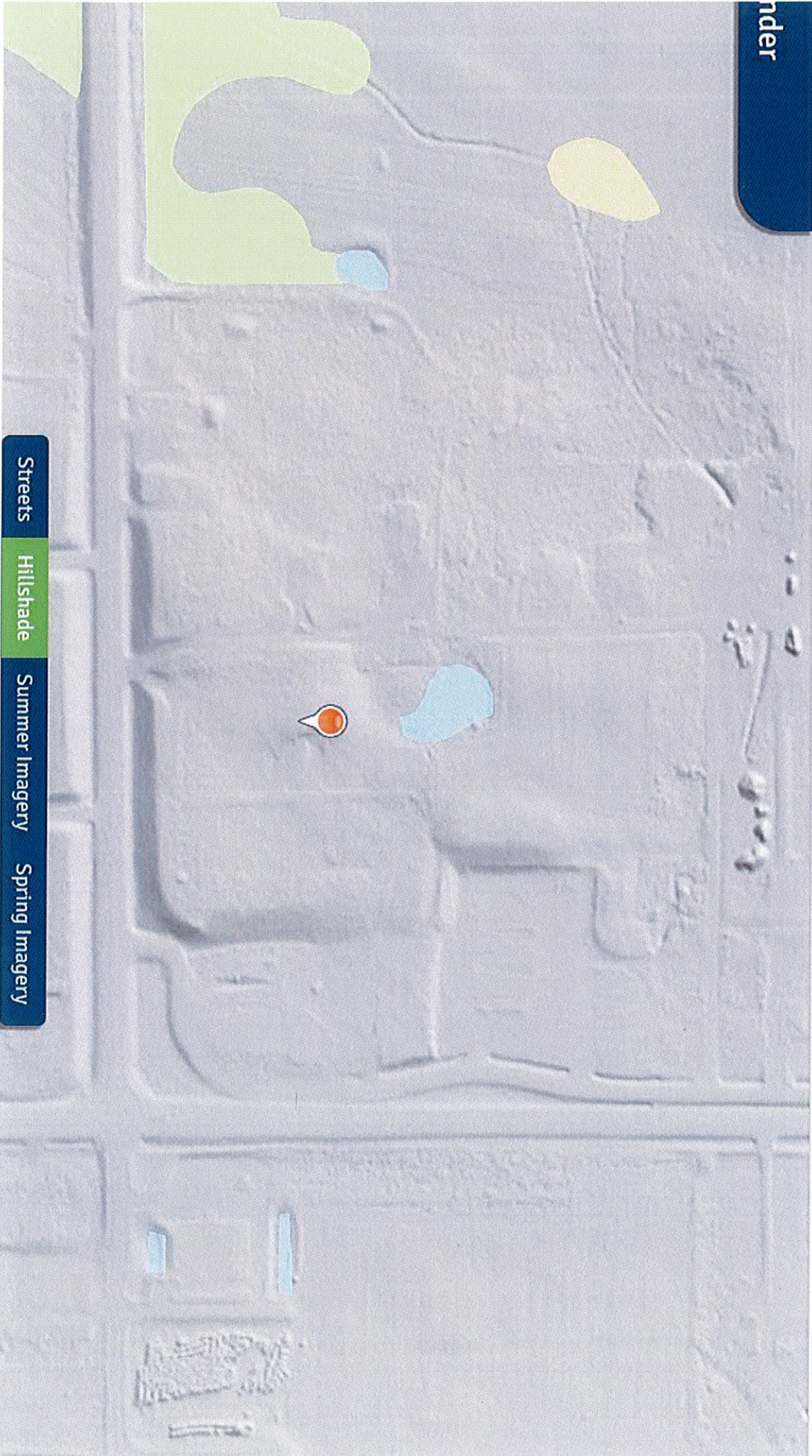
Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

This map is for general reference only. The US Fish and Wildlife Service is not responsible for the accuracy or currentness of the base data shown on this map. All wetlands related data should be used in accordance with the layer metadata found on the Wetlands Mapper web site.



ps://arcgis.dnr.state.mn.us/ewr/wetlandfinder/

nder



Streets

Hillshade

Summer Imagery

Spring Imagery

