Board Members: Dexter Busby, David Deffinbaugh, Kathryn Hanning, John Harding, and Ken Thornton.

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THESE MINUTES ARE PARAPHRASED AND REFLECT THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CASCADE COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS AND ARE CONSIDERED A DRAFT UNTIL FORMALLY APPROVED BY THE ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS.

STAFF ATTENDEES: Kevin Angland, Carey Ann Haight, Alisha Osborne, Kienna Owen-Quinata, Charity Yonker


1. CALL TO ORDER: Ken Thornton called the meeting to order at [09:00AM] [00:00:55]

2. ROLL CALL:
   BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Dexter Busby, David Deffinbaugh, Kathryn Hanning, Ken Thornton.
   BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: John Harding.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:
   A. Draft Meeting Minutes for June 16, 2022. [00:01:36]

   1. Board Discussion & Decision
      Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions for the June 16, 2022 minutes.
      David Deffinbaugh: Motions to approve.
      Dexter Busby: Seconds the motion.
      Ken Thornton: Calls for a vote.
      All in Favor, motion carries 4–0.

   4. OLD BUSINESS: None.

   5. NEW BUSINESS:
      A. Special Use Permit Application #010-2022, Submitted by Sparkettes, to Allow Outdoor Entertainment [00:02:03]
1. Kevin Angland presents the Staff Report.

Motions Presented for the Board’s Consideration:

A: Move that Special Use Permit #010-2022 to allow Outdoor Entertainment on Parcel #2630700, be denied due to (ZBOA member proposing denial must delineate legal reason that the application be denied);

Or

B: Move the Board to adopt the Staff Report in its entirety and approve Special Use Permit #010-2022 to allow Outdoor Entertainment on Parcel #2630700 subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicant obtains any other required county, state, or federal permits and approvals, and comply with the laws, rules, regulations, and/or ordinances associated with any other permits and approvals.
2. Applicant obtains an approved Subsurface Wastewater Treatment System Permit from the City-County Health Department prior to installation of any wastewater treatment system if required or approval to allow for an alternative wastewater disposal system.
3. No structures can exceed 150 feet in height.
4. Operational hours shall be limited to 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

2. Board Discussion [00:07:25]

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions. Hearing none, we will move on to the public hearing.

3. Public Hearing opens at [09:08 AM], [00:07:57]

Ken Thornton: Asks the Applicant to come forward. He asks for his name and address.

Shawn Hertel of 1123 8th Ave N, Great Falls: [States his name and address].

Ken Thornton: Says tell us what you are doing.

Shawn Hertel: Says he is new to this process and is here on behalf of the Sparkettes of Montana and are looking to continue the use of the land that is used for the Trail of Terror, a previous Special Use Permit, and they would like to adapt that to the Trail of Air which is an outdoor airsoft course, using the same facility, same structures, and continue the sport of airsoft in Cascade County. He says there are letters of support from members of the airsoft community. He explains that the point of airsoft can be misinterpreted, and that it was used to fill a niche when Electric City Airsoft closed. Their inventory was purchased, and a fundraising event was started with the Sparkettes. There was much interest for the sport between civilians, military and police department and Sheriff’s Department to use as a training facility and other uses such as camaraderie, sense of purpose and therapeutic methods. If approved, we plan to create a Community Airsoft Mentoring Program (CAMP), which provides real life applications such as gun safety, conflict resolution, and problem-solving skills by trained professionals instead of being behind a video game. He explains the profits from the course will go back into the facility and to benefit the Sparkettes as well.

Ken Thornton: Asks if this will be a year-round activity.

Shawn Hertel: Clarifies that it is seasonal: from spring to the end of September. He says that it is then shut down for the year and we do have birthday parties and private parties that rent that
facility before normal game hours begins. He states that everyone has a great time, the staff is all volunteer and they want to bring something positive to the community.

**Dexter Busby:** Says he has one quick question about the noise level.

**Shawn Hertel:** Says the loudest noise used is an airhorn that signals the start or end of game play, and beyond that the noise of a firecracker at best. The actual airsoft guns are relatively quiet. It would barely be heard if fired in the nearby hallway.

**Public Proponents:**

**Joseph Torgeson of 915 7th Ave NW, Great Falls:** Says he also sits on the Board of Sparkettes with Mr. Hertel. He states he is an Army veteran and wants to teach good mental health habits and support kids. There is support from active military for it and it brings something good to the community.

**Anthony Rodriguez of 1027 3rd Ave South, Great Falls:** Says he has been playing airsoft for a few years. In regard to the volume of an airsoft gun, it is approximately eighty (80) to eighty-five (85) decibels or as loud as a television program. There is no hearing damage resulting. He presents statistics for obesity and states the health benefits of airsoft activities.

**Zhongyau McClure of 113 33rd St N, Great Falls:** Says airsoft will help with those who struggle with physical fitness (PT) tests and may help with suicide rates.

**Ken Thornton:** Asks if there are any more proponents.

**Bryce Keller of 2326 14th Ave S Apt 1, Great Falls:** Says he is in the Air Force and that airsoft is a big deal and he has volunteered as an assistant at the airsoft games. There are benefits to the airsoft for cardio. He explains how the game benefits kids and their self-confidence and enhances skills.

**Ken Thornton:** Ask if there are any more proponent. Hearing none, he calls for opponents.

**Public Opponents:**

**Casey Cummings of 301 4th St SW Great Falls:** Says he has an issue with property rights, not an issue with Sparkettes or airsoft. He states why he is concerned that property rights of the Applicant could include additional rights not granted to the surrounding property owners.

**Ken Thornton:** Calls for opponents. Hearing none, the public hearing is closed.

**Public Hearing closes at 09:24 AM.**

4. **Board Discussion & Action: [00:25:30]**

**Ken Thornton:** Says he would move to discussion or a motion.

**Dexter Busby:** Asks M.s. Yonker to clarify the alleged property rights issue that Mr. Cummings mentioned.

**Charity Yonker:** Says sure and indicates legal council should go first.

**Carey Ann Haight:** Asks if M.s. Yonker wants to go first.

**Charity Yonker:** Says whichever way she prefers.

**Carey Ann Haight:** Says she thinks the concept of adding or subtracting property rights is the wrong way to view this. The use is pursuant to the zoning so long as the ask meets the conditions of the Special Use Permit and to the extent that there are potential conflicts between property owners, the Board can impose conditions to mitigate that.

**Charity Yonker:** Says she believes that the right he is speaking of is the right to quiet enjoyment. There is a balancing act between developing land in accordance with zoning and right to quiet enjoyment and that is the reason for the conditions we have asked the Board to consider. This is also a unique situation in that it is not rural county; it is bordering the city and there are differences between city zoning and county zoning. When the property was purchased the use may not have been established. However, that does not prohibit the use from being established.
When they purchased that property in the City, it was adjacent to the county property subject to county requirements.

Kathryn Hanning: Asks the Chair if she may ask something.

Ken Thornton: Says yes.

Kathryn Hanning: Asks whether the letter from the Health Department was received.

Shawn Hertel: Says he has not. Says Laura is the president of Sparkettes [inaudible].

Kathryn Hanning: Says okay, the reason she is asking is because it appears that the Health Department is going to require the Applicant to not utilize the Port-O-Johns, if she is interpreting it correctly, and the Applicant may want to table the issue and decide if you can afford to go forward.

Shawn Hertel: Says it is his understanding that it is a weekly event and that if it rainy or overheated the facility is not used at all.

Kathryn Hanning: Says the Health Department can require a septic system by law, and it is a lot to take on.

Shawn Hertel: Says he does not know if they will require us to do a septic system or not. He states he thinks they are under the impression we are a year-round, seven day a week operation and we are not.

Kathryn Hanning: Says no, they acknowledge that and say you meet that criteria. She asks if he would like the paper.

Shawn Hertel: Says yes, please.

Kathryn Hanning: Says here you go. We can go forward without it, but I want to ensure everyone knows that to do this, you always have to meet the conditions of local and county permitting and all of that.

Shawn Hertel: Asks if this gets approved, can he still contact the Health Department.

Kathryn Hanning: Says yes, you will not get any further with the project until the Health Department signs off on it.

Shawn Hertel: Asks if they can go through with the SUP process.

Kathryn Hanning: Says yes, she just wanted to make sure the Applicant is aware and comments that it is an expensive deal.

Shawn Hertel: Says yes, it is [inaudible].

Kathryn Hanning: Says yes, maybe. She says she wanted to make sure she mentioned that.

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any other questions or discussion.

Dexter Busby: Motions to approve.

Carey Ann Haight: Says to clarify that it is based on the findings of fact.

Kathryn Hanning: Seconds the motion.

Unknown: Asks if they can get some clarity on screening.

Kathryn Hanning: Says no.

Ken Thornton: Calls for a vote.

All in Favor, motion carries 4 – 0.

B. Special Use Permit Application #011-2022, Submitted by Raymond & Patrice O’Loughlin, to Allow A Second Dwelling [00:34:16]

1. Kienna Owen-Quinata presents the Staff Report.

Motions Presented for the Board’s Consideration:
A: Move that Special Use Permit #011-2022 to allow the construction of a second dwelling unit on Parcel #5449200, be denied due to (ZBOA member proposing denial must delineate legal reason that the application be denied);

Or

B: Move the Board to adopt the Staff Report in its entirety and approve Special Use Permit #011-2022 to allow the construction of a second dwelling unit on Parcel #5449200 subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicant obtains any other required county, state, or federal permits and approvals, and comply with the laws, rules, regulations, and/or ordinances associated with any other permits and approvals.
2. Applicant obtains an approved Subsurface Wastewater Treatment System Permit from the City-County Health Department prior to installation of any wastewater treatment system.

2. Board Discussion [00:39:50]

Ken Thornton: Asks if the Applicant would like to speak.
Patrice O’Loughlin of 4143 Highway 89, Neihart, MT: Says they have a two-acre parcel to put a second dwelling, and explains how they are working with the Health Department and have addressed the septic system and are just waiting on the Health Department to send over the report.

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions.

3. Public Hearing opens at [09:39 AM], [00:41:35]

Proponents: None.
Opponents: None.

4. Board Discussion & Action

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions.
Dexter Busby: Asks whether the property is in the floodplain.
Kienna Owen-Quinata: Says it is not.
Dexter Busby: Says that close to the creek.

Ken Thornton: Says [inaudible].

Kathryn Hanning: Motions to approve.
David Deffinbaugh: Seconds the motion.

Ken Thornton: Calls for a vote.
All in Favor, motion carries 4 – 0.

C. Special Use Permit Application #012-2022, Submitted by Cascade County Public Works, to Allow A Gravel Pit [00:43:51]

1. Kevin Angland presents the Staff Report.
Motions Presented for the Board’s Consideration:
A: Move that Special Use Permits #012-2022 to allow a quarry on the subject property on Parcel #4636300, be denied due to (Board must make findings delineating the legal reason for denial);

Or

B: Move the Board to adopt the Staff Report in its entirety with Findings of Fact and approve Special Use Permits #012-2022 to allow a quarry, including rock crushing, on Parcel #4636300, subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicant obtains any other required county, state, or federal permits and approvals, and comply with the laws, rules, regulations, and/or ordinances associated with any other permits and approvals.
2. Applicant obtains an approved Subsurface Wastewater Treatment System Permit from the City-County Health Department prior to installation of any wastewater treatment system.
3. Operations hours shall be limited from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
4. In the case of an open excavation there shall be a substantial fence, suitable gates, completely enclosing the portion of the property which the excavation is located in, and such fence shall be located at all points forty (40) feet or more from the edge of excavation.
5. No cement plant, grinding, or polishing or cutting machinery, or other chemical process for treating the product of such quarry shall be permitted.
6. In the case where excavation activity is discontinued, the excavation shall be restored in accordance with Open Cut Mining Reclamation guidelines (see MCA § 82-4-400, et. Seq).

2. Board Discussion [00:48:59]

**Ken Thornton:** Asks if there are any questions about findings of fact.

**Dexter Busby:** Says he has a quick question about number five (5). He asks whether they are not restricting the crushing.

**Kevin Angland:** Says we are not. Similar to the previous Special Use Permit for a gravel pit, as they made it clear they do want to rock crush.

**Kathryn Hanning:** Asks if that would have been a separate line item if it had been included.

**Dexter Busby:** Says he is not sure it accomplishes what they are looking for on there. He says he thinks it would not hold up in court.

**Kevin Angland:** Says the Board can reword it, we would have to ask Ms. Haight.

**Carey Ann Haight:** Says it may be modified to reflect it to permit not crushing, but all other activities.

**Dexter Busby:** Says he thinks it should be something similar.

**Ken Thornton:** Asks where it was.

**Kathryn Hanning:** Says it was line five (5).

**Ken Thornton:** Asks what a good way would be to word it to allow crushing.

**Kathryn Hanning:** Says on number five (5), it could say crushing is allowed, period and then no cement plant, grinding or polishing.

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Carey Ann Haight: Says that would work.

Ken Thornton: Asks if we could hear from the Applicant.

Eric Urban of 1564 Charlie Russell, Helena MT: Says he is here representing Cascade County Public Works on their proposal to open a gravel pit. He says it is straightforward and located just southeast of Fairfield and is an agricultural setting. He explains the intent to get a permit from the state based on the Open-Cut Mining Act, and that the site is currently a disturbed agricultural site. The soil will be stripped and stockpiled and seeded, and that once finished mining, the site will be reclaimed to its original condition. All the product from this will be for Cascade County residents for the use of roads, bridges and other needed infrastructure. He states he is available for questions, and thanks the Board for their time.

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions. Hearing none, he then states he has a question. He asks whether there is a difference in a pit that is permitted for crushing gravel and a pit that is permitted for processing.

Eric Urban: Clarifies that the regulations have State of Montana Open-Cut, which identifies the type of equipment that will be operating, and the other set are the Cascade County Zoning Regulations, from which the line in section five (5) comes based out of the environmental section. This lists all the types of activities that can occur with approval with a permit. That is where the specific restriction originates.

Ken Thornton: Says okay.

Dexter Busby: Asks who is taking responsibility for weed control, as there are quite a few noxious weeds in that area. He asks if the County has responsibility for that in the Weed and Mosquito Division.

Eric Urban: Says that is a great question. He says in the 2021 legislation of the Open-Cut Mining Act, the requirement to have an agreement with a County weed management was removed and the current policy is just to notify the Weed and Mosquito. We will notify them of that. The responsibility will be on the operator, who in this case is the Cascade County Public Works Department.

Dexter Busby: Says weeds must be kept under control.

Kevin Angland: Says we did send an Interested Agency letter to the Weed and Mosquito Division and did not receive anything back.

Ken Thornton: Says okay, perhaps we will add condition seven (7).

Dexter Busby: Says and noxious weeds.

Ken Thornton: Says right, and it is disturbed land so they will grow.

3. Public Hearing opens at [09:56 AM], [00:56:48]
   Proponents: None.
   Opponents: None.

4. Board Discussion & Action [00:57:05]
   Dexter Busby: Motions to approve.
   Kathryn Hanning: Says we need a second.
   David Deffinbaugh: Asks if we are going to have a discussion before we vote. He says it seems to follow the requirements as similar requests and he is inclined to second the motion. He says we are treating the government the same as the general public.
Kathryn Hanning: Says that is a very good point.
Ken Thornton: Says it is a good location out away from everybody. It is ideal for a gravel pit. He asks if we have a second.
Kathryn Hanning: Seconds the motion.
Ken Thornton: Calls for a vote.
All in Favor, motion carries 4 – 0.

D. Special Use Permit Application #013-2022, Submitted by Heidi Gibson & Aaron Jewett to Allow A Second Dwelling [01:00:20]

1. Kienna Owen-Quinata presents the Staff Report.

Motions Presented for the Board’s Consideration:

A: Move that Special Use Permit #013-2022 to allow the construction of a second dwelling unit on Parcel #2575875, be denied due to (ZBOA member proposing denial must delineate legal reason that the application be denied);

Or

B: Move the Board to adopt the Staff Report in its entirety and approve Special Use Permit #013-2022 to allow the construction of a second dwelling unit on Parcel #2575875 subject to the following conditions:

1. The Applicant obtains any other required county, state, or federal permits and approvals, and comply with the laws, rules, regulations, and/or ordinances associated with any other permits and approvals.

2. Applicant obtains an approved Subsurface Wastewater Treatment System Permit from the City-County Health Department prior to installation of any wastewater treatment system.

2. Board Discussion [01:05:10]

Ken Thornton: Asks if there are any questions for Staff. Hearing none, he asks if the Board can hear from the Applicant.

Aaron Jewett of 25 Watson Lane, Great Falls, MT: Says they are the owners and the use will be a shop with a mother-in-law apartment due to caregiving and moving mom in with us, it will be five thousand (5000) square feet. In July of 2104, we already went through the Special Use Permit process in which the project was approved once. We already have an address and worked with the Health Department for the septic system. We understand there have been multiple comments on this matter. We have already addressed some concerns regarding well use with a commenter. Provision have been made for cisterns.

3. Public Hearing opens at [10:06 AM], [01:06:51]

Proponents: None.
Opponents: None.

4. Board Discussion & Action [01:07:19]

Ken Thornton: Asks if there is any discussion.
Carey Ann Haight: Says she thinks it is a typo, but she wants to make sure the record is clear. On the Findings of Fact Conclusion, it references the wastewater, and she requests clarification that it is condition two (2), ensuring that it was not some other additional [inaudible].
Kathryn Hanning: Motions to approve.
Ken Thornton: Seconds the motion. He asks if there is any discussion. Hearing none, he explains that the purpose of a second dwelling is what was done on farms and ranches for years. He asks if there is any other discussion. Hearing none, he calls for a vote.
All in Favor, motion carries 4 – 0.

6. BOARD MATTERS [01:09:11]

A. Updated Cascade County Planning & GIS Department Fee Schedule

Ken Thornton: Asks if there is an update to this.
Charity Yonker: Says she included a copy of the updated Fee Schedule that the Commissioners adopted on July 12, 2022. Fees have been revised, there are new fees in there for Planning Services that have been added that we previously did not charge for, and not sure how much detail you would like to go into, but I am happy to answer questions.
Ken Thornton: Asks if the Board votes on them.
Charity Yonker: Says no, it is just to keep you informed. Many times in the past, people have asked about the fee structure for Special Use Permits, so just ensuring you are aware. As far as the Zoning Board of Adjustment is concerned, we now have an After-the-fact for Special Use Permit where previously, we only had them for Location/Conformance Permits. Those After-the-Fact permits take more time to process because most of them come to us as violations to begin with, and our Code Compliance Officer is involved, site inspections must occur, so they are more intensive. We have heard many times over the years from people who will just do it anyway, and our hope is that this deters them. The Planning and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Departments have merged as of July 1, 2022, beginning of the fiscal year. There is not a lot of change with that, our GIS guy was always part of our Department.
Kathryn Hanning: Jokes that he has been squatting there.
Ken Thornton: Jokes that you could not get rid of him, so you just have to adopt him.
Multiple Board Members: [Inaudible].

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING MATTERS WITHIN THE BOARD ‘S JURISDICTION [01:11:40]

Ken Thornton: Says his comment is that you did not have to read through the whole finding of facts like you did before like the training indicated.
Charity Yonker: Says that is correct. Unless the Board wants to bring any of it back to the table.
Dexter Busby: Clarifies that she meant individual items.
Ken Thornton: Says as well as any of the items you guys want to bring back.
Carey Ann Haight: Says that in highly contentious applications, we can go back to that and read through it, because it may help the public understand a little bit better to see that analysis expanded upon.
Kathryn Hanning: Says so on things that are going to have a lot of [contention], you are going to have to read the whole thing, Kevin.
Carey Ann Haight: Says that would be my recommendation.
Ken Thornton: Says if you guys see something that needs to come up, I want you to go ahead and read it. He says we will do our homework a little better.
Dexter Busby: Says he thinks we will see a lot more over time [inaudible] and more people complain about the weeds, because as you develop land, the County cannot control the weeds on all the private property. It is not feasible. Therefore, I think we will have to have a requirement for the Special Use Permits that the weeds need controlled. He explains how he sees an increase in weeds in his area and how the wind affects the spread of weeds. People are not controlling weeds on their five acre lots.

Ken Thornton: Says on his forty acres, the land that was developed is weeds and the old stuff is not. It is because it is disturbed.

Dexter Busby: Agrees that is because it was disturbed.

Ken Thornton: Says it needs to be watched, or that is what will happen.

Dexter Busby: Says he sees new one every year blowing onto the land from other disturbances.

Carey Ann Haight: Says we have half a dozen weed districts that get grant funding for weed control.

Dexter Busby: Says they just cannot do enough for acreage.

Carey Ann Haight: Says yes but apart from [inaudible].

Dexter Busby: Says no, I do not think there is. They have had some rules and regulations.

Ken Thornton: Says They have that in developments, and they have to do that, the law requires it. That is what we may have to do.

Charity Yonker: Says we do have landscaping requirements.

Ken Thornton: Says and we have weed control.

Charity Yonker: Says and I am wondering if that is something that the Board wants to consider and if so, how we can work a noxious weed plan into the zoning districts.

Kathryn Hanning: Says she thinks that is a good idea.

Charity Yonker: Asks based off the Board’s knowledge, if there is a threshold for when that would be triggered. For example, how much land would need to be disturbed.

Dexter Busby: Says a complaint should trigger it. For example, the wind above us causes the dust which generally is not a problem, however, we are starting to see an influx.

Carey Ann Haight: Says we were talking about five (5) acres.

Kathryn Hanning: Says she was talking about how many acres [it would need].

Dexter Busby: Says I do not think it matters if it is a one (1) acre plot. If it is developed, it is left to weeds. He states it becomes a problem for everybody around.

Charity Yonker: Says that is fine, there can be a blanket requirement.

Dexter Busby: Says you spend a lot of time cleaning up leaky spurge and knapweed that was not there two (2) or three (3) years ago.

Kathryn Hanning: Comments that you have to do it if it’s your property.

Dexter Busby: Agrees.

8. **Adjournment at [10:16 AM] [01:17:09]**

Ken Thornton: Asks if the Board shall adjourn.

Kathryn Hanning: Says yes.

Dexter Busby: Says we should adjourn.