**BIGFORK LAND USE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Draft Minutes Thursday May 29, 2025**

**4:00 PM Bethany Lutheran Church – Downstairs Meeting Room**

Chairwoman Susan Johnson called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m.

**Present:** Committee member attendees: Richard Michaud, Jerry Sorensen, Shelley Anderson and Susan Johnson; absent was Chany Ockert and Laura Perry; Public: Five members; Flathead Planning and Zoning: None.

The agenda was approved (m/s, Michaud/Sorensen), vote unanimous

Minutes of the March 27, 2025, meeting were approved (m/s, Anderson/Johnson), vote unanimous.

**Administrator’s Report and Announcements:**

Sign-in sheet passed around. Approved minutes and documents are posted on the County website: flathead.mt.gov Click on Planning and Zoning/Meetings and Boards/Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee.

Anderson reported that Sorensen and Johnson were re-elected to BLUAC for a three-year term by acclamation and Perry was elected to BLUAC for a two-year term by acclamation. A new roster dated June 1, 2025, will be prepared and submitted to Planning and Zoning and to the Election Department.

**Public Comment:**

Linda Walthers-410 Lee Road, Bigfork spoke concerning the hazard of metal markers with orange flags along roadways in Bigfork. She submitted a Violation Complaint Form to Planning and Zoning citing Spectrum, CenturyLink, Ledcor, Lumen and Summit as companies identified on the markers as contributors to community decay. None of the companies are taking responsibility for removing the markers. Roadway mowers hit these markers creating dangerous debris. The state highway department and county weed department agree that the markers are a hazard, but no one is taking responsibility for removing them. Commissioner Brad Able said he would look into the problem. She cannot find the contractor. She has been picking up and disposing of the metal markers.

**Application:**

None

**Unfinished Business:**

Bigfork Neighborhood Plan Update Workshop

Anderson presented a draft update of the Demographics and Economics section of the Bigfork Neighborhood Plan which was approved in 2009. Data analysis is based on decennial U.S. census results for 2000, 2010, and 2020. Population growth between 2010 and 2020 was 19.5% and supported by 7 new residential subdivisions and the development of 102 multi-family apartment units. The population has continued to age with the median age now 54 years. Population growth for the next 15 years is 2% annually. Economically, the population has become more affluent. In 2000, 15.2% of households earned over $75,000 annually. In 2020, 49.6% of households earned over $75,000. Tourism continues to be the economic driver in Bigfork, but industry sectors continue to shift with the national economy. Anderson asked Fire Chief Patton if he could make a correlation between population growth and calls for service for the Plan update. Anderson stated there was additional data needed for the update and suggested that the committee focus on the sections’ Goals and Policies at the next workshop.

Public Comment:

Jeremy Patton-Bigfork Fire Chief stated that new legislation should help identify the number of short-term rentals and seasonal residences which will help in quantifying the impact of the summer population on infrastructure and public safety.

Ry Keller-332 Lake Hills Drive, Bigfork questioned the area which is defined by the U.S Census, i.e. school district, fire district. Anderson provided the boundaries which include the fire and school districts. Sorensen also added that the area includes the zoning overlay.

Linda Walthers-410 Lee Road, Bigfork asked if there would be an analysis of the cost of living and the price of homes. Will there be an analysis of water and sewer capacity and the impact of private wells and septic in the rural areas? Anderson stated that that analysis will be done in the Housing section of the Plan. Sorensen added that the water and sewer capacity will be the main driver in identifying areas for residential growth in the water/sewer district.

**New Business:**

Dan Cotman was appointed to BLUAC for a one-year term to expire on May 31, 2026. The vote was unanimous.

Sorensen moved and Johnson seconded the motion to appoint Richard Michaud to the one-year term Member-at-Large position to expire on May 31, 2026. The vote was unanimous.

Anderson moved and Michaud seconded the motion to appoint Johnson as Chair and Sorensen as Vice-Chair of BLUAC to expire on May 31, 2026. The vote was unanimous.

**Adjourn:**

Sorenson moved and Anderson seconded the motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously at 5:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shelley Anderson, member and acting recording secretary