

[Print Page](#)

## 'Theater' disrupts BLUAC meeting

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Last week's Bigfork Land Use Advisory Committee meeting had all the elements of a great Shakespearean play--intrigue, antagonists, strong plot development and most of all, drama. Surprising when there was only one item on the agenda.

The stage was set directly after chairman Scott Hollinger called the meeting to order. Fellow committee member Phil Hanson called a Point of Order and asked for the discharge of Hollinger and Tim Calaway due to each having five absences in 2005.

Hollinger responded by stating that the absences were excused.

"How can you do justice to the people if you aren't here--excused or not?" BLUAC member John Bourquin asked. "You are not serving the public. I'd be embarrassed if I were you sitting over there."

"You shouldn't be chairing the meeting. Five meetings out of 12--you're not doing your job," Hanson added.

In the newly amended bylaws it states, "Any committee member who misses three consecutive meetings, or a total of five meetings in a calendar year, shall be dismissed and replaced. Vacancies occurring on the committee shall be filed within 30 days. Appointments will be made by the BLUAC, and appointees will serve until the next election."

The excused absences, although not mentioned in the old or new bylaws, were agreed upon by the committee years ago to pardon members who could not be present during meetings due to conflicting family or business appointments, Hollinger argued.

"It is too bad that we get to change our bylaws at whim to suit our fancy," Bourquin said.

"Your overall view of perfect doesn't exist in Bigfork," Calaway retorted.

In an interview after the meeting, Hollinger said he had contacted the planners and reviewed the agenda with them prior to each absence.

"I knew Clarice as vice-chair was very capable of running the meetings," he explained. "The meetings I missed didn't have long agenda items, and the existing items were fairly routine and short to review. I knew the board would be able to do a good job and reach a good decision. I'm not so egotistical to think that the group can't make a good decision if I'm not there."

It was noted that if the BLUAC meeting time of 4 p.m. was changed to a post-work day time of 6 p.m., then business conflicts could be avoided. Hollinger noted that the Flathead County Planning Office had requested 4 p.m. to avoid overtime for its attending representatives.

The planning office had offered its recommendation in a Dec. 19 letter that Hollinger and Calaway should not be removed because their absences were excused. Furthermore, it was requested by the planning office representative present at the meeting, Kirsten Holland, that the debate be tabled.

Despite this, Bourquin made a motion for the dismissal of both Calaway and Hollinger, that two new members be immediately appointed, and that the meeting should continue under the new committee. A vote was called and the motion failed.

Clarice Ryan motioned to table the matter as per request of the planning office representatives until such time as a decision could be made by current BLUAC members, county commissioners and county planners. There was no second, and consequently Ryan's motion died.

BLUAC member Bob Keenan admonished those present, both on the committee and in the audience, for unbecoming conduct.

"If this weren't such great theater, it would be embarrassing. I think all 27 people in this room should be embarrassed," Keenan chimed in. "There is a coup in process that will be accomplished in few months."

Keenan was referring to the fact that the BLUAC bylaws were officially amended Dec. 8 to address the election of members. The process will replace the appointment of members by the Flathead County Commissioners. To accommodate the amendment, the terms of appointees due to expire in December was extended until May, at which time an election will be held to fill their positions. The extensions will also be in effect for those members whose terms are up in December 2006 and 2007. The elections will coincide with school elections.

Those who are interested in vying for one of the two positions that will be left vacant by Hollinger and Jack Paulsen this year have until Feb. 16 to apply. Applicants must have lived in BLUAC's coverage area for at least two years.

During new business at Thursday's meeting, Tim Calaway made the motion that because BLUAC is an all-volunteer committee and since meetings are held during working hours and many members own businesses, that members be excused for valid reasons. Those excused absences would not be counted in absenteeism towards their position on BLUAC and the committee member should call the chairman and/or the Flathead County Planning Office with their excuse for absence. Bob Keenan seconded the motion. The motion carried with two nay votes from Hanson and Bourquin.

Hollinger said that the current upheaval within the committee has a lot to do with ideology about Bigfork's future.

"The Steering Committee has a direction they want to take Bigfork, and they think the present BLUAC isn't in lock-step with them," Hollinger said. "Basically, it boils down to the people who have been supportive of private property rights are a threat to those who believe that socialization of property is good."