

Moratorium on campgrounds begins

To last four months with possible extension

Steve Clark | Staff writer

BURNETT COUNTY – With no vocal opposition, the Burnett County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to impose a moratorium on campgrounds and campground expansions at their Thursday, March 18, meeting. The moratorium goes into effect immediately and will last four months but may be extended for up to six more months if necessary. It does not apply to any application pending before March 18.

A number of citizens spoke during the public comments period in support of the moratorium. Steve Pearson, a previous chair of the town of Oakland, was the first to speak. “We’ve been blindsided by the rapid proliferation of these so-called campgrounds and all that comes with that. ... Dropping a small town in the middle of a long-established rural neighborhood ... you know that something is out of whack.”

Don Hamilton urged the board to take the time during the moratorium to study and update Chapter 30 to make it clear that it is a matter of county policy to only approve conditional use permits that “are consistent with the land use goals stated in the plans.”

Supervisor Craig Conroy echoed Hamilton’s concerns that the county’s ordinance Chapter 30 needs to be reviewed in light of changes to the state code (Act 67 – 2017), which he claimed “has shifted the burden of proof to local government. If all the conditions can be satisfied it’s very difficult for an application to be denied, even if it’s totally contradictory to the land use goals of an area.”

Conroy, who is the vice chair of the land



Scott Smedberg’s camper last seen in Polk County is probably not the park model RV feared by concerned citizens. Smedberg, from Minneapolis, used his e-bike for his recent five-day outing to the North Woods, telling the Leader, “It seems I never have to worry about where to stay as lots of people like what they see and are very inviting!” – Photo provided

use committee, which recommended the moratorium to the full board, also said that there have been lots of requests, and most all of them “very contentious.”

“We need to step back ... we could use a breather and take time to look at the multiple issues,” he said.

As pointed out at other hearings on the topic, campgrounds today are not what they once were. A major change has been in the park models – large RVs that are not very mobile and need to be brought in by a semitruck. Many supervisors and citizens alike voiced their concern about the “wear and tear” to the county. Many campgrounds, although seasonal, have 100% permanent placements, meaning that if a person came through on a bicycle

or motorcycle or car looking for a place to camp for the night, they would be out of luck.

Following the meeting, the Leader contacted Conroy to discuss the issue and potential next steps.

He suggested that Chair Don Taylor would be taking the lead to create perhaps a subcommittee of the land use committee that could also then meet with concerned citizens as well as campground operators to achieve common ground. “With the moratorium in place and without a contentious hearing going on, maybe we can piece something together that will work for everyone,” he said.

Wisconsin ACT 67 – 2017 The new requirements in a nutshell

- from the Center for Land Use Education
- UWSP

The requirements and conditions specified in the ordinance or imposed by the zoning board must be reasonable, and to the extent practicable, measurable.

Any condition imposed must relate to the purpose of the ordinance and be based on substantial evidence.

Substantial evidence means facts and information, other than merely personal preferences or speculation, directly pertaining to the requirements and conditions an applicant must meet to obtain a conditional use permit and that a reasonable person would accept in support of a conclusion.

If an applicant meets, or agrees to meet, all of the requirements and conditions specified in the ordinance or imposed by the zoning board, the local government must grant the CUP.

The applicant must provide substantial evidence that the application and all requirements and conditions are, or shall be, satisfied.

If an applicant does not meet one or more of the requirements (for example the application is incomplete) or conditions specified in the ordinance or imposed by the zoning board, the local government can deny the CUP.

A local government’s decision to approve or deny a conditional use permit must be supported by substantial evidence.