MERCER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES

The Mercer County Planning Commission met Thursday evening January 15th, 2026 at the Mercer County Courthouse in Stanton, Eslinger called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. C.T.

Members Present: Mike Eslinger, Chris Renner, Casey Voigt, Kevin Hafner, Shane Cole, Rick Bauman

Members Absent: Gerald Bieber, Joey Neumiller

Others Present: Darren Hellman (Coteau Freedom Mine), Andy Thomas, Amanda Hoffer

Eslinger wanted meeting place added to the agenda. Motion by Bauman, seconded by Hafner, to approve the agenda as amended, all members present voted "aye", motion passed. Motion by Cole, seconded by Renner, to approve the minutes of December 22nd, 2025. All members present voted "aye", motion passed.

New Business

Zoning Case 26-01-01

The public hearing will be held for the purpose of considering an application from Andy & Sarah Thomas for approval of a Conditional Use for a non-farm residence within an Ag Zoned District of the Mercer County Zoning District Map. The subject parcel is located approximately 6 miles East & 1 ½ miles north of Hazen. The parcel is 5 acres in size and is described as Parcel 1 in W2 of the W2 in Section 5 T144N R85W of the 5th Principle Meridian, Mercer County ND. Land Use Admin mentioned this was just bringing them into compliance as the structure has already been built. Voigt made a motion to approve, seconded by Renner. Eslinger asked for any further discussion. Eslinger asked about his business office. Thomas said his home office is in his house and business office at the mine site. Eslinger said some signage would be nice going to the business. Thomas said due to MSHA it had to be moved. Discussion on the road going to residence. Bauman thought a street sign would work. Bauman will talk with Elroy. No other discussion. Roll call vote, all members present voted "aye".

Zoning Case 26-01-02

The public hearing will be held for the purpose of considering an application from Coteau Properties for approval to amend existing Conditional Use Zoning Case 02-12-01. Coteau is proposing the addition of 2,224.7 acres for coal excavation and mining. The subject parcels are located in the W2 of Section 1 & 12, portion of Section 2 & 11 in T 144N R89W and the E2 of Section 32, T 145N, R88W of the 5th Principle Meridian, Mercer County ND. Darren presented maps showing current & future mining area. They are submitting to PSC next week. They have surface and minerals lease agreements acquired. All studies have been done as far as soils, cultural, water, etc. Voigt asked about the farmsteads in the area. Darren said there will be negotiations with the homeowners as far as relocation but they are aware and have signed land leases. Motion by Voigt, seconded by Renner, all members present voted "aye"

Other Business

Eslinger thanked the board for all their hard work in regards to the ordinance re-write. Bauman explained the late, missed deadlines by Kaffar and not having the full, completed project in time. The contract has expired. SRF Consulting Firm has been contacted to critique what we have so far. Jen will meet with them on Tuesday, Jan 20th. Discussion on the Next Era Project and needing a special use permit for data centers in our current ordinance. Discussion on where to hold the meetings. They will be

held at the Beulah Civic Center. In the future they may get moved to the new building the county is buying, north of Beulah by the roundabout, once the building is ready. Also discussed meeting days. Thursdays due not work the best for Jen. Voigt mentioned moving the meetings to the 2nd Wednesday and then there would be a Commission meeting the following Wednesday. Jen mentioned if there is an extra week in the month sometimes the applicants have to wait almost 3 weeks for the case to be heard at the Commission level. The board will give this a try. Next scheduled meeting is Wednesday Feb. 11th @ 7:00 pm at the Beulah Civic Center.

Motion to adjourn made by Cole, seconded by Renner. The meeting was adjourned at 6:55 pm.

APPROVED:
Jen Neumiller
Land Use Administrator

ATTEST:
Mike Eslinger, Chairman