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County board gives final approval to Osprey Lake 'green' development

Terrell Boettcher / News Editor
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The 12-unit Shores of Osprey "Green" Planned Unit Development (PUD) on Osprey Lake cleared its final hurdle with a 11-0 favorable vote by the Sawyer County Board on Jan. 17.

At the request of the attorney for the Osprey Lake Property Owners Association and with the agreement of the developer, Dr. Ted Thompson, the board added one more condition to the conditional use permit: Units may be rented to tenants, provided that the lease is for 90 days or more to a single tenant. No subrentals or subleases will be allowed.

The PUD is the result of negotiations between the developer, the Wisconsin DNR and the Lac Courte Oreilles Tribe.

Board member Kathy McCoy said that "the whole plan hinges on the property owners policing themselves, a sense of ownership by the people who have these units. To have a continual turnover with rentals would not promote that sense of ownership to go along with all the rules that are there, because it wouldn't affect them (renters) directly."

The conditional use permit applies to the 198 acres known as Osprey Lake Preserve, excluding properties now owned by third parties.

In another zoning action, the board approved a rezone of 40 acres on Highway 63 South from Forestry to Industrial for Thompson and Sons, for the location and operation of a wood pellet manufacturing plant by the purchaser, Great Lakes Renewable Energy Inc.

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Also, the board approved a Town of Spider Lake zoning amendment dealing with shoreland use corridors.

Drug court
Shelley Bartz, drug court and community service coordinator for Sawyer County Circuit Court, updated the board on how the drug court program is doing. It began its fourth year on Jan. 1.

Bartz said drug court is an alternative to incarceration for persons addicted to alcohol and other drugs who have pled guilty to misdemeanor crimes. Most participants are facing

prison time for third, fourth or fifth offense drunken driving, which is "our number-one problem in Sawyer County," she said. "Second is cocaine and third is THC (marijuana)."

Bartz said the average drug court participant in Sawyer County is 32 to 35 years old and Caucasian. The first three years of drug court were funded with a \$450,000 federal grant, most of which went for inpatient and outpatient treatment and daily drug testing of participants, Bartz said.

Since the grant ran out, existing county staff have absorbed the duties, Bartz said. To date, 35 people have gone through the 9-to-12-month voluntary program and 49 percent have graduated. Those who fail the program serve their jail or prison time.

Staff track graduates for a year afterward to see if they commit any more crimes. The recidivism rate is about 5 percent, Bartz added.

"We have had a tremendous amount of success among our graduates," Bartz said. There has been a savings in prison costs, people have become employed, and children are born drug-free," she said. One participant is a woman who "in the first month of pregnancy was using cocaine to try to miscarry the baby. We put her into treatment. Now, her baby is due next week," Bartz said. Much of the inpatient treatment cost is absorbed by the state Department of Corrections, she added.

Congress has appropriated new money of \$15.2 million for drug courts, Bartz added. An Eau Claire judge stated that without drug court, there is a 95 percent relapse rate among offenders within three years. Drug court participants meet individually every Thursday at 2 p.m. with the judge and other staff. At 3 p.m., drug court is open to the public.

Power line money
McCoy noted that in December, the county received its first annual environmental impact payment of \$59,162 from American Transmission Company (ATC) as part of the impact fees paid to local governments through whose territory the Arrowhead-Weston electrical transmission line runs. This is in addition to the \$359,971 remaining in the county fund from the initial ATC payment of \$1,063,766.

This money is all placed into a nonlapsing county line item fund which earns interest. Annual payments to the county will gradually decrease to zero in the year 2047. The county hasn't decided what to do with the money remaining in the fund; the money must be spent for "environmental programs."

Chairman Hal Helwig said ATC representatives have offered additional money to the county to offset the

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impact of the expanded electrical substation on Boylan Road north of Stone Lake.

Other action:

In other actions on Jan. 17, the board:

- Approved a Wisconsin Bureau of Geographic Names request to name an unnamed 35-acre body of water west of North Clover Road in the towns of Winter and Draper as Kocmoud Lake. The board's action is contingent upon the approval of the Town of Draper board, from which no response has been received.
- Approved the annual Sawyer County Forest work plan;
- Approved an annual contract with Maximus Financial Services of Bloomington, Minn. to prepare an indirect cost allocation plan to maximize federal reimbursements to the county;
- Approved the hiring of a second mechanic to fill a vacancy due to a resignation at the county highway department;
- Reappointed Kathy McCoy as the county representative to the Northern Waters Library Service Board;
- Appointed David DiSera as education representative to the Sawyer County Traffic Safety Commission. Board member Pat Aderman said the 9-1-1 Committee is working with the LCO Tribe on replacement fire/house numbers on the reservation.

A big concern for emergency services is the same name being used for multiple roads in the county, such as Anderson, Olson, Town Line and Hoffman, Aderman said.

What probably will happen is that the road with the most people on it will get to keep that name. On the other roads, the county will ask the respective towns to choose a different name, Aderman said.

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