

Traverse County Commission
Public Hearing
November 30, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Commission Chairman Todd Johnson. Other Commissioners present included Dave Salberg, Mark Gail, Dwight Nelson and Kayla Schmidt. The pledge of allegiance was recited. The reason for the Public Hearing is for the Commissioner to obtain public comment on the County's consideration of a moratorium on the establishment or expansion of animal feedlots and on the construction or placement of new non-farm dwellings within one-mile of an existing feedlot, for up to a period of one year in order to allow the Traverse County Planning and Zoning Board to conduct a study on the proper number of animal units to be allowed on animal feedlots, and the proper distance between non-farm dwellings in Traverse County. T. Johnson went over the rules of business for a public hearing.

There was approximately 85 members of the public present, with 11 members asking to speak. T. Johnson explained to the public that the Commissioners had received five letters from the public regarding the proposed moratorium and they had all taken them into consideration. T. Johnson then opened it up to the public for comments. The Commissioners heard from those that had concerns about water, questions and concerns about the proposed ordinance, and those that were in favor of the ordinance and those that are not in favor of the ordinance.

After the public comment period the Commissioners had discussion. Schmidt has major concerns about the water supply in Traverse County. When Dollymount Dairy expanded its animal heads in 2019 it was then in 2020 and 2021 that they went over in their water usage permit. T. Johnson doesn't think that approving the proposed moratorium is something that we need to do. The current water permitting process did accomplish what it was supposed to up until this point, it showed a red flag on what was proposed for ground water usage so they are looking at alternatives. Nelson said that with people on both sides of the issue, it makes it difficult to make a decision that is best for Traverse County. He is in favor of the moratorium in order to give the Commissioners more time to make the most informed decision. Gail asked if any farmers have a tiled field, he said that a lot of water comes out of those tiles every year. He said eventually it absorbs back into the land. Riverview is looking at different options right now to use other options rather than using ground water, he agreed with one of the letters that the Commissioners received from the public. It stated that if Traverse County puts in the proposed moratorium it says to potential businesses that we don't want them in Traverse County which in turn is causing potential tax revenue to not want to come into Traverse County and it will raise the tax burden on all remaining citizens of the County in the future. He also believes that the current permitting regulations are sufficient to protect the people and the environment in Traverse County and additional regulations are not necessary. Salberg received a phone call from our Senator Torrey Westrom and they discussed this moratorium, Senator Westrom doesn't think that Traverse County needs it and they discussed that each individual Township should decide if they want to put a moratorium into place, it shouldn't be a county wide decision. Salberg said that we don't need a moratorium for our Planning Commission to dig deeper into this issue. The Department of Natural Resources are the professionals and we

should allow them to make the decision if there is enough water or not. Schmidt said that Nelson brought up a good point at the last Zoning meeting, he said that aquifers don't start and stop at the Township borders. Schmidt made a motion to pass the proposed ordinance authorizing a study of the proper number of animal units to be allowed on animal feedlots within Traverse County and imposing a moratorium on the establishment or expansion of animal feedlots, there was a second by Nelson, there was no further discussion. The moratorium failed by a vote of 2-3 with Nelson and Schmidt in favor and Salberg, Gail and T. Johnson opposed.

T. Johnson thanked the public for coming and adjourned the meeting at 11:43 a.m.

Lisa Zahl, County Coordinator

Todd Johnson, Board Chairman