



# Town Newsline

## Many Recent Changes

We have been working on bringing everything in our ordinances into compliance with local and state statutes for the last couple of years. Many residents have felt left out of the process even though all changes have had public hearings and postings in the paper and online.

If a change directly affects your property, or you are close to an area that is requesting a change, ( things like variances, interim use permits for in home businesses, or zoning changes) you would have also been sent a notice of that public hearing in the mail.

Meeting dates are announced on our display board in front of Town hall and Public Hearings are posted on our website and are published in the local paper. We will be updating our website so it is easier to post details about meetings and events and we will be trying to do more newsletters to the residents.

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### Special points of interest

- Be a volunteer helper
- Send us your comments on the things we are working on.
- Come to meetings and give input.
- Be part of shaping how our community grows!

## Recodification of Ordinances

### Athens Township Town Code



#### We need your help!

We need to form a committee of people that have been on Planning and Zoning or the Town Board in the past when ordinances have been changed and updated.

We are working with an outside source to codify or compile all the past ordinance history up to the present day into an orderly fashion. The ordinances are also looked at during this process to be sure they meet all the state statutes and make certain everything was done

in the proper way over the years.

We need to research all our past updates and try to find those original changes so that we can log the progression of the changes.

If you love to dig into our past records and want to help us come up with a clean new copy of our ordinances, please email us with your interest at ,

[zoning@athenstownship.com](mailto:zoning@athenstownship.com)

*Our ordinances have never been codified. After years of changes we need to be able to track all those updates and changes.*

#### **Please Volunteer!**

This community has not raised taxes on the local level for 7 years!

We can only keep going and run things with cost savings if you get involved.

We will be starting up a new comprehensive plan committee soon and need members to direct our future.

We need volunteers for things like clean up day.

It also saves us all money if you see trash on the road, if you can just pick it up or we have to pay people to go out and get it.

## **ATHENS TOWNSHIP Snow Removal Policy**

**The goal of Athens Township is to have all Township roads passable within a reasonable amount of time after a three inch or more snowfall has stopped.**

**Please remember: the blue or amber flashing lights identify the snow removal equipment as emergency vehicles and motorists should maintain a proper distance from these vehicles including a respectable distance from the rear.**

**The Township does not assure a completely bare road and will not sand entire sections of roadway. The sanding of intersections, approaches, hills, and curves are a priority. Users of the road system are reminded to exercise caution and to realize that the legal speed limit may not be reasonable in certain weather conditions.**

**The Township usually will not dispatch snowplows until the snowfall has stopped; with exceptions possible during periods of extended snowfall. Sanding will be placed at problem locations.**

**Mailboxes damaged during snow removal are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Only mailboxes that are properly built, located, and installed in accordance with Minnesota Department of Transportation standards and which are damaged by actual contact with the snow removal equipment will be repaired at Township expense.**

**Residents are cautioned that it is unlawful to plow snow from private driveways onto or across any public roadway. *Thank you for your help & cooperation in making Athens a safer place!***

# The Board of Appeal and Equalization

The board of what equals who?

The Board of Appeal and Equalization has statutory responsibility to review estimated market values and property classifications. Its function is to hear appeals of individual property owners and determine the correct value or classification. The Board consists of five members-at-large.

If you have questions about your property taxes, the tax value of your home, etc. this is the meeting you want to attend to address these concerns. There are different meetings set for the various entities that property taxes are put towards – county, school, township. Check your tax statement to find out where the various meetings are held and when.

The Board of Appeal and Equalization happens at the **township level** in **April** of each year for the **next** tax year. Last year the meeting was April 18, 2022 at 7:00 PM.

For more information you can go to: <https://www.revenue.state.mn.us/board-appeal-and-equalization>

## Clean up Day

Do you have things laying around that you've been wanting to get rid of? Maybe an old tire, a dead lawnmower battery or some lumber left over from a home improvement project?

The **Athens Township Cleanup Day** is **Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023** at the township hall. The perfect time for you to clean house. Join us for cleanup day and enjoy a **free lunch**. Proof of residency may be needed – driver's license, tax statement, bill with your address...



## Ditch Debris



Dumping trash or debris in the ditch is **against the law.**

Don't risk being caught.

Report suspicious activity to the authorities.



## Planning and Zoning

The planning and Zoning commission has been quite busy for the last several years bringing long needed updates to our codes and ordinance.

Some sections were outdated and required by law to be brought up to current laws and standards.

In some cases we had no way to enforce our ordinances when issues came up so we adopted administrative penalties.

The complete Town only had 1 zoning overlay and now we have decided that not every area is the same, and especially residential neighborhoods and business areas should not be treated the same, so we are breaking things down and creating rules that fit the differing areas.

## Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

"Accessory dwelling unit" (ADU) means a residential living unit on the same parcel as a single-family dwelling. The ADU provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons. It may take various forms: a detached unit; a unit that is part of an accessory structure, such as a detached garage; or a unit that is part of an expanded or remodeled primary dwelling."

We are working on an ordinance to allow for these units on a home-steaded property.

We have had many requests for people asking to take care of a loved one by having a secondary dwelling on their property.

Any ADU would need to meet all current building codes and we hope to adopt the Tiny House codes as well which allow for more options in building.

We want your input as we develop this and other ordinances so please watch the website and paper for Public Hearings on these ordinances and attend the meetings in person or online.



*Secondary dwellings can include tiny houses*

## Residential Zoning

We have had instances where someone applies for a specific use permit in an area of smaller lots and all houses and we are not sure that areas like this should have the same kinds of things allowed that are allowed on a 20 acre lot, or in an area where house are far apart due to noise and traffic concerns.

We are looking at creating a zoning specific to residential areas to alleviate the concerns of neighbors in this type of neighborhood.

Until recently everything in the Town has been zoned A/R or agricultural residential. We already have rules about no farm animals in these areas and only 3 dogs, limited chickens, etc. By making a specific zoning for residential neighborhoods, these rules can all go in one place they and are more easily under-

## Scanning and Digitizing Records

For years all of our records have been in a number of different locations in books and file cabinets and some at the Town Clerks residence.

When people call looking for things or even when we try to look back at what actions were taken by the Board or Planning and Zoning Commission a few years ago, it takes a lot of time to find what we are looking for.

The Town Board approved a budget for scanning and digitizing all the records of the past and present so we have access to everything in one place when we need those records. Everything will be OCR scanned and in PDF format so that many types of programs will be able to access them. We will have everything backed up and protected for the future.

## General Business Area

### Our New General Business Area

This area is envisioned for larger construction type businesses that need more outside storage and have equipment and vehicles that need to be parked outside.

There are already businesses there such as Tradewinds Heating, a/c and Fireplace, and Larson Plumbing and Heating that also own the tree farm and boutique.

These businesses have been there a long time and yet the area was never properly zoned for the businesses.

There is currently a moratorium in place on new development until we can finish putting together ordinances that make sense for our Town and the surrounding residents.

We welcome your input on these ordinances as we develop them.



*After many years of inactivity, the Town has moved forward with our comprehensive plan goals of turning the highway 65 corridor into commercial zoning.*

## Retail and Business Area

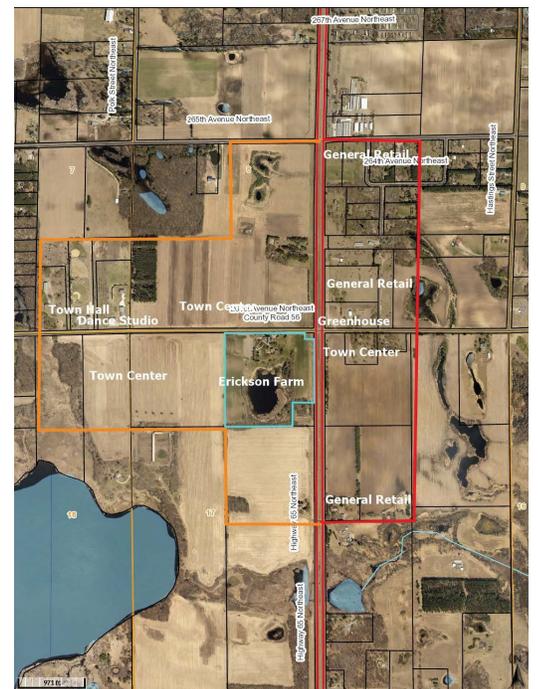
After many years of inactivity, the Town has moved forward with our Comprehensive Plan goals of turning the highway 65 corridor into commercial zoning. These goals go all the way back to our citizen approved 2004 Comprehensive plan. Our comp plan committee had numerous times over the years working on updates to this corridor but none were ever officially adopted.

The Planning and Zoning Commission has envisioned something total unique for this area. We would like to become a Destination for people to come, stay, and visit local attractions. Building off of the events at the Erickson Farm or the Sunflower festival at the Green Barn we hope to attract more of the homegrown art and locally made products. We have thought about potentially allowing buildings where someone has the lower level as a studio or manufacturing area and can live in upper residential quarters.

We have thought about trying to attract some kind of a restaurant. Perhaps we could create ordinances that would allow for a “walkable market area on the west side of highway 65 near the Town hall and the Dance studio.

The east side already has the Green Barn and Georges Greenhouse, and that is where we would locate any larger retail operations.

If you would be interested in sharing your ideas for this area and helping with ordinance ideas, please email us or come to the planning and zoning meetings every third Thursday of the month.



## Light Industrial Area

The Planning and Zoning Commission has envisioned this area as an expansion of the industrial area on the west side of Highway 65 as you enter the Town.

The thought is companies that do all their manufacturing or work inside, so "Quiet Industrial."

Many residents of Athens have small businesses they started in their homes and are now looking to expand to a commercial location nearby, however there has been no areas properly zoned for business. Our highway corridor was planned since 2004 in our comprehensive plan to be commercial or business however back then Isanti County was in charge and was not allowing new commercial expansion.

Today, all of the Highway 65 corridor is zoned for some type of commercial.



### Town of Athens

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YOUR LOGO HERE