Dunn County Board OKs runoff rules

By Pamela Powers
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MENOMONIE — After two years of work, the shoreland and wetland zoning ordinance cleared the Dunn County Board of Supervisors Wednesday on a 19-7 vote.

About 75 people attended the board meeting. Of the nearly 15 people who spoke, two-thirds supported the ordinance. At last month's County Board meeting, most who spoke opposed the ordinance.

"This ordinance was not entered into lightly," said Dunn County zoning administrator Cleo Herrick. "It's been in process about two years."

Dick Lamers, president of the Tainter Menomin Lake Improvement Association, supported the ordinance.

"You can't wait," he said. "You have to stand up."

Most of the people speaking in favor of the ordinance said it was time and urged Dunn County officials to be leaders on protecting and improving surface waters.

"It's time to do something," said Sue Beety, a former supervisor and a current Menomonie City Council member. "You all know this is the right thing to do."

Scott McGovern, a UW-Stout scientist, said a large, wide vegetative buffer zone is better for water quality.

Mark Kinney of rural Menomonie opposed the ordinance and said there was a petition with 210 signatures opposing it.

Those opposed to the ordinance expressed concern about cost and the difficulty of compliance.

The goal of the ordinance is to help cut back on runoff, which causes water pollution and blue green algae growth. The ordinance only would affect unincorporated areas of the county. The current
shoreland zoning was put in place in 1968. Counties are required to revise their shoreland ordinances by February 2014 to comply with Department of Natural Resources rules.

Under the ordinance natural vegetation would be required 35 feet from navigable waterways, which is the same as the 1968 rules. Crops that do not require rows, like hay, will be allowed in the setback area. Grazing will be allowed under proper management rules. Buffers must be installed by July 1, 2015.

Property owners will be allowed a 30-foot viewing area within that buffer that would allow for trimming and shorter native vegetation and a 15-foot open access spot to the waterway that may be mowed.

An attempt was made to remove the required 15-foot open access spot and allow the entire viewing area to be mowed and open, but it failed on a 15-10 vote.

Agricultural property owners can seek a 20-foot setback if they scientifically prove the soils do not runoff phosphorus into the waterway.

Residents will be allowed to keep what they have with current vegetation, Herrick said. In cases where homes are closer than 35 feet to the water, residents can have a one-third the distance buffer approved.

A very simplistic approach to meeting the requirement is to stop mowing buffer areas, she added, noting that would cost residents nothing.

Under the ordinance no permits for up to 15 percent impervious surface on property would be required and permits would be needed for impervious surface of 15 to 30 percent. Mitigation of runoff would be required with the permits including rain gardens, retention basins and eave troughs.

Buffer zones would provide shelter for wildlife, help keep sentiment out of the waterways, reduce erosion and runoff.

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