

The Muscatine County Zoning Commission met in the Board of Supervisors Office on Friday, March 10, 2023, with Chairperson Tom Harper and board members Carol Schlueter, Martha Peterson, Virginia Cooper, and Brad Akers present. Eric S. Furnas, Planning, Zoning & Environmental Administrator and Dixie Seitz, Office Administrator were also in attendance.

Others present for this hearing: Humberto Vazquez.

Tom Harper: I will open the public hearing by reading the mission statement. The Muscatine County Zoning Commission is a five-member group of residents of the County who are appointed by the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors. We serve as non-professionals and without compensation. Our purpose is to advise the Muscatine County Board of Supervisors on managing the growth of the County. This involves reviewing subdivisions, rezoning requests, the use of public property, and reports related to land use policy and long range planning. Recognizing that our decisions will not satisfy everyone, we attempt to base our decisions on what is best for the long term interest of the County. We ask for your input, pro or con, on issues before us in order that we may formulate the best decisions possible. Please take this opportunity to share your thoughts and concerns with us. Our recommendations are not taken lightly by the Board of Supervisors, but the Board of Supervisors, your elected representatives, make the final decisions on all issues. The other thing that we need to do is to approve the minutes from the last meeting, if there are no changes. We've all have received them. If there are no changes, is there a motion to approve?

Carol Schlueter: Motion to approve the minutes.

Tom Harper: Is there a second?

Brad Akers: Second.

Tom Harper: There has been a motion to approve the minutes from the last meeting and it has been seconded. All those in favor please say Aye (5) Opposed (0). The motion is approved, the minutes are approved. Eric, would you like to tell us a little about this change?

Eric Furnas: I have given you two attachments.

RE: Public Hearing on proposed amendments to the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance as it relates to local meat lockers and butcher shops.

On Friday, March 10, 2023, we will hold a public hearing to consider changes to the Muscatine County Zoning Ordinance that would involve potentially adding a definition for Local Meat Lockers and Butcher Shops and possibly placing this type of land use as a Special Permitted Use in the A-1 Agricultural District.

Due to workforce shortages and supply chain issue during the COVID-19 Pandemic, demand for local meat processing services exploded. As a result, many people came to enjoy the concept of farm to table meat production and demand for local meat processing services has remained at an all-time high. Currently, Muscatine County Zoning regulations do not differentiate between local meat lockers and butcher shops and full-scale industrial packing plants and slaughter houses. As a result, all types and sizes of meat processing facilities are only allowed as a Special Permitted Use in the I-2 Heavy Industrial District.

During the COVID pandemic and since it ended, there has been increased interest expressed in the development of local butcher shops and meat lockers. Additionally, valid questions and concerns have been raised over the requirement that these types of facilities be located only in Heavy Industrial areas.

In checking with other Counties, I have found that some counties do allow smaller types of meat processing facilities in zoning districts other than Heavy Industrial. It is my belief that Muscatine County should consider something similar.

During the Public Hearing we will need to discuss several things:

1. A definition of Local Butcher Shops and Meat Lockers.
2. Requirements for siting of these types of facilities, including separation distances and impact to County Roads and other infrastructure.
3. Handling of animal bi-products.
4. Size and slaughter limitations for these types of facilities.
5. Commercial signage considerations.
6. Other?

I will have recommendations to present on each of the above discussion items, but if more issues come to light that require additional research and discussion, it is not required that you make an actual recommendation to the Board of Supervisors after just one session. However, it is fine if you do.

Local Meat Lockers and Butcher Shops

Definition: A facility or premises that by nature of size and scope, is intended to serve a local or regional customer base, in the slaughter, processing and packaging of livestock, fowl or wild game for human consumption.

Recommend that Local Meat Lockers and Butcher Shops be allowed as a Special Permitted Use in the A-1 Zoning District.

Considerations-

- Separation distances from other structures – Recommend 750’ and would not include the dwelling owned by the owner/operator.
- Protection of County Roads – Recommend that these types of operations only be allowed on lots with frontage along fully paved County or State Highways.
- Size and Scope limitations – Recommend a formula that limits the number of animals being slaughtered and processed per week. Local Meat Lockers and Butcher Shops shall be limited to the slaughter and processing of no more than 30 Animal Units per week in total or combination, where one finished beef or bison equals 1.0 animal units, one head of swine equals .4 animal units, one head of sheep or goats equals .1 animal units and one head of fowl equals .018 animal units. No limits will be assigned to the processing of wild game.
- Licensure and inspection by IDALS and/or USDA
- Handling of solid waste animal by-products and waste water. All solid waste, wastewater and animal by-products shall be contained and disposed of in accordance with applicable local, state and federal guidelines. Solid waste, wastewater and animal by-products shall be stored in sealed containers or within a building so as to contain objectionable sights and smells.
- Parking – Provide adequate parking and truck/trailer turn around area so that there will be no parking, backing off of or onto the public roadway.
- Animal staging areas- Animal staging areas shall be constructed or shielded in manner that does not allow for the viewing of animals from the public roadway. Staging areas shall be constructed in a manner in which all manure is contained.

Notes: The Zoning Commission held a long discussion concerning this proposed amendment. Some of the Zoning Commission members would like to see this proposed amendment in all areas of the county, even on gravel, not only paved roads.

They also felt that they should recommend the distance be 1,250 feet from the next nearest residence and shouldn't be allowed for anything less than 750 feet.

Eric Furnas will type up a proposed ordinance and present it at the next Zoning Commission meeting for the members to recommend to the Board of Supervisors.

MUSCATINE COUNTY ZONING COMMISSION

By Eric S. Furnas, Planning, Zoning & Environmental Administrator