

# Baldwin looks at greater local control

## The township considers moving zoning in-house

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*Union-Times*

Township officials discussed potentially moving zoning in-house in Baldwin Township, a move that could grant the community greater independence.

Baldwin Township discussed the possibility of taking over its own zoning from the county during a joint March 17 meeting.

The topic was broached during the township's annual meeting March 9, with almost everyone in attendance approving of the township moving zoning in-house. The move also would be a step toward incorporating Baldwin as its own city, an idea that was also met with virtually unanimous support during the annual meeting when attendees were asked their opinion on it.

On March 17 members of the Town Board, Planning Commission and Park Committee discussed a general idea of what in-house zoning could look like. Board Chair Jay Swanson outlined why he wanted in-house zoning, arguing it was important for maintaining local control in Baldwin Township.

Swanson asserted that the Town Board currently functions as an advisory commission to the county when it comes to determining zoning in the township.

"There have been very many times, in fact, when we've made recommendations to the county and they have not done them," Swanson said.

Swanson referred to

an incident in which a resident wanted to put a three-season porch on their property, which the township board approved. The resident had sunk over \$1,000 into the project before the Sherburne County Board of Adjustment ruled against the porch, according to Swanson.

The Board of Adjustment is responsible for reviewing variance applications and other appeals relating to zoning ordinance, according to the county website.

Swanson also raised concerns about who sits on the Board of Adjustments, which he suggested could become stacked with mostly city residents.

"The way we hedge our bets and protect ourselves — if you will — move forward in a direction that we see fit is to take over our zoning," Swanson said.

The largest obstacle the township has to taking over zoning is the requirements for bringing on staff to handle the duties, according to Swanson.

Two representatives from The Planning Company spoke during the meeting to give attendees an idea of what contracting zoning out to a private company would look like.

Dan Licht with The Planning Company said it usually functions as the first point of contact with residents, informing them what limits exist on what they can do with their property.

Typically the company starts on administrative

duties, like dealing with building permits, then over the long term picks up duties like the comprehensive plan, Licht said.

Licht made the selling point that the company contracts on an as-needed basis, so if the township doesn't need him they don't have to stay contracted with him.

"So if 2006 happens again and development drops off the table you're not incurring any costs, you're also not laying anybody off," Licht said.

When asked what hiring The Planning Company may cost the taxpayers, Licht said the company is structured to be an affordable option for communities. For example, he pointed out they charge a flat rate for meetings, so it doesn't matter how long a board meeting runs.

"The purpose is we want to be at the meetings, because that's where you interact with town board and the planning commission and the park commission," Licht said. "That's where the discussion happens, that's where there needs to be advice provided."

How much of those costs would be put onto taxpayers, versus paid as fees, would be dependent on what the township board decides.

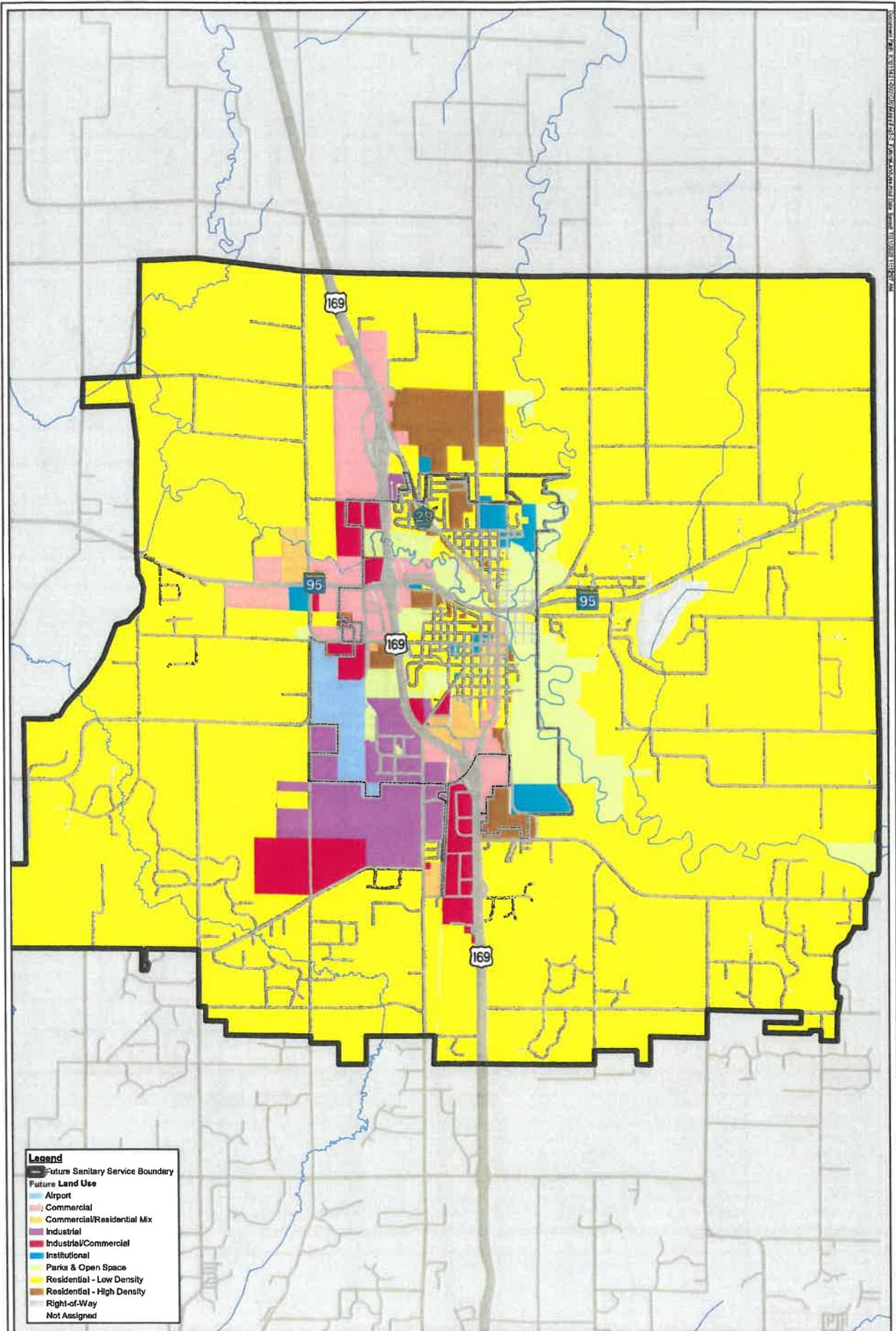
The township will be discussing zoning at future meetings. Swanson said he expects to speak with additional private contractors to compare costs. The township also needs to formerly alert Sherburne County well in advance of taking control of local zoning.

Town & Country  
SHOPPER

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**Figure 3-2. Future Land Use**  
 Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan  
 City of Princeton, MN



**414.033 ANNEXATION BY ORDINANCE.**

Subdivision 1. **Unincorporated property.** Unincorporated property abutting a municipality may be annexed to the municipality by ordinance as provided for in this section.

Subd. 2. **Conditions.** A municipal council may by ordinance declare land annexed to the municipality and any such land is deemed to be urban or suburban in character or about to become so if:

(1) the land is owned by the municipality;

(2) the land is completely surrounded by land within the municipal limits;

(3) the land abuts the municipality and the area to be annexed is 120 acres or less, and the area to be annexed is not presently served by public wastewater facilities or public wastewater facilities are not otherwise available, and the municipality receives a petition for annexation from all the property owners of the land. Except as provided for by an orderly annexation agreement, this clause may not be used to annex any property contiguous to any property either simultaneously proposed to be or previously annexed under this clause within the preceding 12 months if the property is or has been owned at any point during that period by the same owners and annexation would cumulatively exceed 120 acres; or

(4) the land has been approved after August 1, 1995, by a preliminary plat or final plat for subdivision to provide residential lots that average 21,780 square feet or less in area and the land is located within two miles of the municipal limits.

Subd. 2a. [Repealed, 1997 c 202 art 5 s 9]

Subd. 2b. **Notice, hearing required.** Before a municipality may adopt an ordinance under subdivision 2, clause (2), (3), or (4), a municipality must hold a public hearing and give 30 days' written notice by certified mail to the town or towns affected by the proposed ordinance and to all landowners within and contiguous to the area to be annexed.

Subd. 3. **60 percent bordered and 40 acres or less.** If the perimeter of the area to be annexed by a municipality is 60 percent or more bordered by the municipality and if the area to be annexed is 40 acres or less, the municipality shall serve notice of intent to annex upon the town board and the chief administrative law judge, unless the area is appropriate for annexation by ordinance under subdivision 2, clause (3). The town board shall have 90 days from the date of service to serve objections with the chief administrative law judge. If no objections are forthcoming within the said 90-day period, such land may be annexed by ordinance. If objections are filed with the chief administrative law judge, the chief administrative law judge shall conduct hearings and issue an order as in the case of annexations under section 414.031, subdivisions 3 and 4.

Subd. 4. [Repealed, 1978 c 705 s 33]

Subd. 5. **Petition by property owners; objections; procedure.** If the land is platted, or, if unplatted, does not exceed 200 acres, a majority of the property owners in number may petition the municipal council to have such land included within the abutting municipality and, within ten days thereafter, shall file copies of the petition with the chief administrative law judge, the town board, the county board and the municipal council of any other municipality which borders the land to be annexed. Within 90 days from the date of service, the town board or the municipal council of such abutting municipality may submit written objections to the annexation to the chief administrative law judge and the annexing municipality. Upon receipt of such objections, the chief administrative law judge shall proceed to hold a hearing and issue an order in accordance with section 414.031, subdivisions 3 and 4. If written objections are not submitted within the time specified in this section and if the municipal council determines that property proposed for the annexation is now or

is about to become urban or suburban in character, it may by ordinance declare such land annexed to the municipality. If the petition is not signed by all the property owners of the land proposed to be annexed, the ordinance shall not be enacted until the municipal council has held a hearing on the proposed annexation after at least 30 days' mailed notice to all property owners within the area to be annexed.

**Subd. 6. If pending proceeding; waivers from parties.** Whenever a proceeding for annexation is initiated under this section and all or any part of the land is included in another boundary adjustment proceeding pending before the chief administrative law judge, no action thereon shall be taken by the municipality, unless otherwise provided by an order of the chief administrative law judge, until final disposition has been made of the pending petition. Under this section, the chief administrative law judge will accept a waiver from all parties having a right to object, stating they have no objections to the proposed annexation and waiving the 90-day period before an annexation ordinance may be adopted.

**Subd. 7. Filing; effective date; copy to auditors.** Any annexation ordinance provided for in this section must be filed with the chief administrative law judge, the township, the county auditor and the secretary of state and is final on the date the ordinance is approved by the chief administrative law judge. A copy of the annexation ordinance must be delivered immediately by the governing body of the municipality to the appropriate county auditors.

Subd. 8. [Repealed, 1980 c 487 s 23]

Subd. 9. [Repealed, 1997 c 87 s 4]

**Subd. 10. Chief administrative law judge may require additional information.** The chief administrative law judge may require the city or property owners to furnish additional information concerning an annexation by ordinance to inform the chief administrative law judge about the extent to which the proposed annexation conforms to the statutory criteria set forth in sections 414.01, subdivision 1, and 414.031, subdivision 4.

**Subd. 11. When annexed land is in floodplain or shoreland area.** When a municipality declares land annexed to the municipality under subdivision 2, clause (3), and the land is within a designated floodplain, as provided by section 103F.111, subdivision 4, or a shoreland area, as provided by section 103F.205, subdivision 4, the municipality shall adopt or amend its land use controls to conform to chapter 103F, and any new development of the annexed land shall be subject to chapter 103F.

**Subd. 12. Property taxes.** When a municipality annexes land under subdivision 2, clause (2), (3), or (4), property taxes payable on the annexed land shall continue to be paid to the affected town or towns for the year in which the annexation becomes effective. If the annexation becomes effective on or before August 1 of a levy year, the municipality may levy on the annexed area beginning with that same levy year. If the annexation becomes effective after August 1 of a levy year, the town may continue to levy on the annexed area for that levy year, and the municipality may not levy on the annexed area until the following levy year.

**Subd. 13. Electric utility service notice; cost impact.** At least 30 days before a municipality may adopt an ordinance under subdivision 2, clause (2), (3), or (4), the petitioner must be notified by the municipality that the cost of electric utility service to the petitioner may change if the land is annexed to the municipality. The notice must include an estimate of the cost impact of any change in electric utility services, including rate changes and assessments, resulting from the annexation.

**History:** 1969 c 1146 s 12; 1975 c 271 s 6; 1978 c 705 s 15-21; 1979 c 50 s 52; 1985 c 30 s 2,3; 1991 c 291 art 12 s 24; 1992 c 556 s 5-8; 1994 c 511 s 4-8; 1996 c 303 s 13,14; 1997 c 31 art 3 s 14,15; 1997 c 202 art 5 s 3-5; 2002 c 223 s 8-12; 2006 c 270 art 2 s 8,9,13; 2007 c 90 s 2,3,5; 2008 c 196 art 2 s 15; 2008 c 277 art 1 s 98; 2014 c 220 s 3