



City of Cedar Rapids
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
City Hall Council Chambers
Wednesday, February 26, 2014
4:00 p.m.

The meeting was brought to order at 4:04 p.m.

Present: Council members Vernon (Chair) and Weinacht. Staff members present: Gary Kranse, Community Development Director; Wayne Jerman, Police Chief; Mark English, Fire Chief; Sven Leff, Parks and Recreation Director; Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner; LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager; Pam Mosbaugh, Leased Housing Specialist; Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner; Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner; and Alicia Abernathey, Community Development Administrative Assistant.

Council member Vernon stated the Development Committee meets monthly and the purpose of the committee is to review development and economic issues that involve the community. Items are brought forward to the agenda from City staff, Council members and sometimes citizens.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to approve the minutes from January 22, 2014. Council member Weinacht made a motion to approve the minutes from January 22, 2014. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Informational Items and Updates

Gary Kranse, Community Development Director, stated staff was going to provide an update on ROOTs but the update will be deferred until the March Development Committee meeting.

1. Renaming H Street SW

Sven Leff, Parks and Recreation Director, stated this item came from the December 17th City Council meeting when Councilwoman Vernon mentioned H Street SW does not fit with the naming conventions for the City's streets. It was requested the street be renamed to something that is in line with the festival grounds or the amphitheatre. Mr. Leff stated following the meeting it came to Parks and Recreation to consider name options but there is an important aspect to the festival grounds located on H Street SW. The grounds include a park that is a Peace Officers Memorial and a dedication will be coming up this summer. Mr. Leff stated he felt it would be appropriate to defer the naming of the street to the City's Public Safety Chiefs.

Wayne Jerman, Police Chief, stated the Police Department is appreciative and honored the park is named after Officer Sunner. The Police Department decided to work with the Fire Department to have a joint naming of the street as the park is already named after a Police Officer. The current Police Department employees were asked what they would like the name of the street to

be and several suggestions were made. Of the suggestions made, Valor Way was the number one suggestion made that was forwarded to Mr. Leff and Chief English.

Mark English, Fire Chief, stated the Fire Department could not have agreed more that Valor Way is a great name for the street. The Fire Department has been in existence for 145 years and seven people have been lost in the line of duty. Two of the seven were in traffic accidents, two in fires, two drown and one died of a heart attack. Valor Way is also a tip of a hat or respect to the Veterans and current people in the military.

Council member Weinacht stated it is a proper name to honor those who serve us. Council member Vernon stated there is unanimous consent to send the recommendation to City Council.

2. Historic Preservation Commission Demolition Review Period

Thomas Smith, Community Development Planner, stated the current demolition review process that the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) uses has one procedural area that creates a number of issues for HPC and staff. The ordinance is design so when a demolition application is received there is a 10 business day wait period in which the HPC must review the application or the application is released for lack of action. Upon reviewing the application the HPC can place the demolition on a 60 day stay or release the application for demolition without any delay. Mr. Smith stated the HPC is currently meeting the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month to meet the ordinance requirements for the 10 business day wait period.

Mr. Smith presented various scenarios to demonstrate the negative impacts of the current 10 business day review period. Mr. Smith stated this may present issues for the applicant as it is may be an inconvenience to applicant's schedule to attend the HPC meeting. If the applicant is unable to attend the meeting not all information is available and this may increase the likelihood of a hold. Mr. Smith stated issues for the HPC include receiving demolition application 24 hours before the meeting with little time to research the historic value. This creates uncertainty and hesitation about releasing demolition applications. If no demolition applications are received, cancellation notices are sent at the last minute. Mr. Smith stated issues for staff include struggles to balance the ordinance and open meetings laws as the newspaper notice doesn't include applications received 3 days or less before a meeting. Final agenda are often posted only 24 hours before a meeting and it is difficult to compile staff reports and presentations the day of a meeting, especially if there is trouble contacting an applicant.

Mr. Smith stated the HPC discussed the issue at their January meeting and recommended a 15 business day wait period. This would mean demolition applications would be due the Friday prior to a meeting and would allow notices for all demolitions to be posted in the Gazette. The final agenda packet would be sent out the Monday prior to the meeting which provides 32 hours for site visits and research.

Mr. Smith reviewed the previously presented scenarios that demonstrated the negative impacts and also presented scenarios of how the process could be improved by changing the review period to 15 business days.

Council member Vernon suggested when staff is sending the posting for the gazette they also let the HPC members know which properties are coming for demolition review.

3. Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Plan Update

LaSheila Yates, Housing Programs Manager, stated the purpose of the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program is to assist very low income persons, persons 62 and over and person with disabilities. The intent of the program at the national level is to serve families that are in need of rent assistance. In order to address the needs the program has an Administrative Plan and Annual Plan to detail how the program operates and any goals or barriers. The program allocates approximately \$5,000,000 in rent assistance payments which is paid directly to landlords in Linn and Benton County. Ms. Yates identified 2013 accomplishments including the High Performer rating and a total of 151 families were served throughout the year under the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program.

Ms. Yates stated of the families on the program, 75% have an annual income of under \$15,000 with 54% of the families having at least one person with a disability and 12% are 62 and over. As this is a federal program there is no time limit on how long someone can be on the program but the average length of time a family is on the program is 3.75 years. Because most of the families make \$15,000 or less each year the majority of the families do not have earned income. Income is received from other sources such as pensions, general assistance, Social Security, Child Support Benefits, etc.

Ms. Yates identified some of the goals for the next five years including maximizing the number of families assisted with available resources and continuing to provide information and resources to program participants as to the location of units outside of areas of high poverty concentration. Ms. Yates identified significant changes made to the plan including adding a limited Child Welfare and Housing preference for up to 75 families with children under the age of 18 that are experiencing homelessness or at imminent risk of homelessness and have current involvement with the Iowa Department of Human Services Child Welfare Division (DHS).

Council member Vernon asked where the insufficient funding was coming from for the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) contracts that are terminating families. Ms. Yates stated last year there were challenges that could have terminated families but staff made adjustments and didn't have to terminate families. Due to this Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is requiring a plan be in place should HAP contracts need to be terminated in the future.

Council member Weinacht made a motion to move plan update to the full City Council. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

4. Chapter 32 Updates

Seth Gunnerson, Community Development Planner, stated staff would like to update a variety of sections within Chapter 32. The updates are stemmed from errors in the current code and aspects of the code that are creating a lot of variances through the Board of Adjustment (BOA).

Jeff Hintz, Community Development Planner, stated the current regulations exempt any sign that is three square feet or less from obtaining a sign permit. The intent of the regulation to exempt entrance signs but staff would propose increasing the size limits and place additional limitations. The recommendation is based upon survey of signage in town, practices of other communities and United States Sign Council's recommendation. Staff recommends informational signs exempt from permitting would be allowed if they are no more than six square feet in size, no more than five feet tall and no more than two per approved access point.

Mr. Hintz stated from 2001 to 2006 there were no variance requests pertaining to garages or accessory structures at the rear of residential properties. Since 2006 77 variances have been sought and of those 70 have been approved with 43 variances sought and approved since 2010. The current regulations allow for a detached garage at 900 sq. ft. and 40% of rear yard area while 1,250 sq. ft. and no larger than 50% of the home is allowed for attached garages. The intent of the regulation is to prevent overcrowding in rear yards as it takes away from neighborhoods and open space. Mr. Hintz provided options for Development Committee consideration and identified the option staff recommends.

Mr. Gunnerson stated Urban Agriculture was discussed at the January meeting and identified the recommendations presented at the January meeting. Recommendations included allowing Urban agriculture in all zone districts, permits required for primary uses or accessory uses over 1/4th of the an acre and allowing riding garden tractors with deck widths up to 36 inches.

Council member Vernon asked if there was a way to regulate what chemicals are being used. Mr. Gunnerson stated staff can research the topic and provide options at the next meeting. Council member Weinacht asked how often permits have to be renewed. Mr. Gunnerson stated permits have to be renewed annually.

Mr. Gunnerson stated in 2013 the City created the Development Services Department to handle land development cases. Roles taken over by the Development Services Department are currently defined in the Zoning Ordinance as belonging to Community Development. Staff is recommending the code be updated to reflect recent organization of roles and responsibilities. Staff would recommend identifying roles, not job titles, to accommodate any future changes.

Mr. Gunnerson stated Gymnasiums in Industrial Areas was previously recommended by the Development Committee in November 2013. The recommendation allows gymnasiums and similar uses within Industrial Zone Districts as Conditional Uses.

Mr. Gunnerson stated in 2012 the City added a Shopping Center category and in error replaced General Retail. Staff recommends adding General Retail back to the parking requirements table with 3 spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. GFA. Mr. Gunnerson stated staff is also recommending clarification of the definition of Assisted Living, Small to read “2 or fewer persons.”

Council member Vernon and Council member Weinacht expressed support for all Chapter 32 update recommendations.

Council member Vernon called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council member Weinacht made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously with none opposed.

Meeting adjourned at 5:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alicia Abernathey, Administrative Assistant II
Community Development