

Members Present: Erin Harves, Robert Niffen, Greg Scott

Staff Present: Michael Webb, City Manager
Katie Ross, Administrative Specialist for Planning Services
Bradley Hocevar, City Planner

PLANNING COMMISSION

The regular meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Scott at 6:00 p.m.

Minutes from April 21, 2021

Minutes were not approved for January, February, or March as there was not a quorum.

New Business

- a. **Review – Comprehensive Plan – “Growth Management” (pp. 61 - 68) / “Community Character” (pp. 69 - 75) / “Parks and Recreation” (pp. 77 - 79) / “Economic Development” (pp. 81 – 89)**

City Planner Bradley Hocevar took the podium to discuss the comprehensive plan. He briefly reviewed the big comments from the last meeting. Are these goals still our views? A lot of this is dictated by market and utilities.

City Manager Michael Webb asked if everyone understood where the sewers were located.

City Planner Bradley Hocevar asked if, as far as policy goes, are these still our goals?

City Manager Michael Webb spoke about the future land use of the City. If someone is looking to put in a project, we want to encourage them to use the existing utilities. We do not want to create a hodge-podge of development. If someone wants to build and extend the sewers they can, but most people are looking for existing sites that already have access to utilities. We want to encourage the development to be where we already have infrastructure.

City Planner Bradley Hocevar moved on to Community Character. What are your thoughts on code enforcement activities? Is that still an issue today? What sort of issues have you seen?

City Manager Michael Webb mentioned small town vision, big city pride. Most issues are around residential and what that should be. There are also issues of Parks and

Recreation broadly. People generally want code enforcement, yet do not like when it is enforced, which creates challenges.

Commissioner Harves commented about the junk yard type look with cars piled up. Some people also still have gravel roads.

City Planner Bradley Hocevar said this is a common issue that comes up.

Vice Chairman Scott asked what the current standards are regarding parking and cars to which City Planner Bradley Hocevar replied they are pretty straight forward.

City Manager Michael Webb also replied that the code says the parking place and access has to be a hard surface, except in the A/G district (which is the first seventy-five feet). This sounds easy, but problems arise. Such as, when the existing conditions are gravel, or someone wants a barn in the back of their property, it's not in the public right of way. What triggers us to have them upgrade the surface?

Vice Chairman Scott asked if gravel is considered a hard surface.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that it is not. People may ask for paver stones, or other materials. That can make it challenging. When someone builds new, it is pretty easy.

Vice Chairman Scott asked about tags/registered vehicles. If someone has an old trailer, is that required to sit on a paved surface?

City Manager Michael Webb replied that if it is parked, it is supposed to be on a hard surface. However, if the parking place has always been gravel, we have not taken the position that you now have to do that. Now if someone wants to park a boat beside their house, and that is new, then yes, that is new parking and it needs to be paved.

Commissioner Harves asked about temporary parking verse cars that are just sitting there and not moving.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that for law enforcement, if it is on the street, in a public area, if it is disabled, they can have it towed. If it is on private property, they look at, is it licensed and registered? Is it operational? It can be getting worked on. It can be challenging. The court is not built around code enforcement very well. We may start moving code enforcement cases to another judge that has a history with code enforcement. It sounds like property maintenance is relatively normal.

Commissioner Niffen commented on property maintenance codes and that we could adopt those.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that is a difficult one.

Vice Chairman Scott said there are several properties around town that have un-operatable cars sitting there, in the grass, behind their garage, covered, etc.

Commissioner Harves commented that she has been having to clean up tires on one of her properties, yet code enforcement lets these cars just sit on other properties.

Vice Chairman Scott said we should definitely have something in our code, because we don't want properties looking like a salvage yard.

City Manager Michael Webb said that code enforcement is a challenge but what it sounds like he is hearing is that it is still a valid goal.

Commissioner Niffen commented that the code enforcement officer is a very important role. He asked if they were under the police department, which City Manager Michael Webb replied that she is under public works. The only difference is the authority, she can not issue a ticket. However, she can write out a sworn statement for the court. She has filed dozens of cases with the court.

Vice Chairman Scott said that the City should be attractive and that we have a big issue with trash along the roadways. This creates a big turn off. When someone comes to look here for a place to live, they see long grass and trash. Those items affect us a lot in attractiveness, some of which is out of our hands because of KDOT.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that he has had some good conversations with KDOT about these issues. We need to take care of our entries though.

Commissioner Harves and Vice Chairman Scott both commented that their first impression of the City when they moved here years ago was all the weeds and trash. That it was a beautiful area, but it looked like no one cared, or it just wasn't in the budget to take care of it. Vice Chairman Scott mentioned in his work, if your bathrooms are clean, the assumption is everything else is clean. If we focus on our front door, it shows that we care and are trying.

City Manager Michael Webb commented that if we don't take care of our stuff, how can we expect everyone else to? The City vehicles are kept clean, if we see trash outside City Hall, we pick it up.

Commissioner Harves mentioned that we could organize to have volunteers help clean up the streets. The community would work together to clean the trash.

City Manager Michael Webb brought up the issue around housing availability. If someone wants to move here, where would they go? Different people have different needs. We have rural housing, a couple subdivisions, that's all. There is not a lot of housing choices.

Commissioner Harves replied that there are apartment buildings at the Legends, and we can keep those up there to keep the rift raft out.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that the finishes in the apartment mean everything.

Vice Chairman Scott also replied that a lot of that is driven by the price point.

City Manager Michael Webb also mentioned higher end apartments and what kind of people that would bring into the community, possibly a school teacher, a cop, etc. We have to find a better way to offer housing.

Vice Chairman Scott asked what would you want to see? A big apartment complex, or another subdivision? What would be best for the City? A subdivision is a lot of streets, maintenance, all of it. What would be best for the City?

City Planner Bradley Hocevar replied that he thought mixed use would be best. It gives both housing and shops and creates an atmosphere. If there was an acre or two, where you could squeeze in something like a law office or a shop, with housing on top, that would be a good use of land.

City Manager Michael Webb said that a typical subdivision takes a hundred acres, and a lot of time. If you look at our land use, and where the utilities are, this creates a problem. If you have a single man and a single woman, now they are ready to move up to a home, they like the area but where are they going to go? Now they are looking for schools for their kids. People go where the schools are. If they are good, people will come, if they are bad, they will leave. He discussed taxes, credits, and economics. We have to find a way to promote why it's not a bad thing to have some apartments. You have to find the right developers. You can't expect Legends, or Lenexa square footage prices here. Our market is different. How do we, as a Planning Commission, find ways to promote housing in areas we want to see it.

Vice Chairman Scott asked that if we have that information as locals, on where good lots are, do we have ways to advertise that? Are we doing that already?

City Manager Michael Webb replied no, not really. The focus has been more on warehouse and industrial development. They go to realtors.

Vice Chairman Scott said we have great opportunities based on our location. Whether its housing or apartments, but someone has to have that conversation with the land owners. Ask them if they would be interested in their properties in this plan.

City Planner Bradley Hocevar replied that it would be good to have it on the website. The County has an online map that shows properties and what is for sale. It has the information online using GIS.

City Manager Michael Webb discussed that he was looking into doing a housing study.

Commissioner Harves replied that we had already done a housing study. That the Commissioners went somewhere downtown for it.

City Planner Bradley Hocevar reminded everyone that the overlay districts have been eliminated. Parks and Recreation have done a pretty great job. The parks and trails can really distract from all the other stuff.

Commissioner Niffen discussed how beautiful the river run is on the new trail behind Fastenal.

City Manager Michael Webb brought up a park reserve policy. That developers should contribute to a parks fund. No different than sewer. That is not a policy that we have, but should look into. We don't want to make it too expensive for developers, but at the same time, we should have something where they help with parks. People use those trails while they are on break for work. It gives somewhere for their employees to go too. They should help to get the park system started. To help reserve and develop that park land.

Vice Chairman Scott said that we have river frontage that we are not utilizing at all. If we had the money, we should think of developing that river front. It could be something we are proud of. Maybe have a retail area down there. Like Weston, people come out of town just to go to that area.

Commissioner Niffen replied that a farmers' market down there would be nice.

Vice Chairman Scott said it would take a lot of money to develop it, but we should figure out a way. He brought up the possibility of bad publicity with trails, in the woods, whether there are lights, and if something bad was to happen.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that studies on trails and parks show the opposite. That they are safe because criminals don't want to be seen, and that other people could see them. They increase property value. He also discussed the future of 98th Street and how it would eventually be a main corridor. What about Kansas Avenue, what kind of development do we want to see? We want to make sure we are telling people what the Commissioners are wanting to see, and not something else.

Commissioner Harves said that when she is looking to get gas, she doesn't want to have to do circles. She wants to be able to get off, and get right back on to where she was going. If there are roundabouts she wouldn't want to go that way for a quick stop.

Commissioner Niffen said that all of these ideas have been great idea, but we need a salesman if we want to get any of them done. That we should look at hiring someone to help us.

City Manager Michael Webb said that he has been the salesman.

Vice Chairman Scott brought up unsafe houses and a few locations that should be looked at. We want the City to be attractive, maybe we could put up a nice monument sign.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that we would have to work with the State to change the monument sign. Whatever we do will have to be maintained.

Vice Chairman Scott replied that the responsibility could go to Parks and Recreation.

City Manager Michael Webb replied that we had a position for a ground's keeper.

Staff Reports

City Manager Michael Webb discussed the road project to the north as well as the Kincaid property and the work they are doing there. He also discussed the sewer on the north end of town.

Adjournment

Vice Chairman Scott made the motion to adjourn the meeting.

Minutes submitted by Katie Ross, Administrative Specialist.