

**WALKER PLANNING COMMISSION  
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES  
April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
6:00 p.m. 701 Elm Avenue Walker Fire Hall Meeting Room**

- 1. Call to Order** 6:00 p.m. by Chair Wilkening  
**Roll Call**-Members Present: Rich Hansen, Mary Beth Hansen and Gary Wilkening  
Members Absent: Sue Ostlund, Randy Carlson  
Staff: Pamela Smith  
Public: None
  
- 2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda.**  
Rich Hansen requested the addition of a discussion in regards to the viability of his seat on this Board for long term.
  
- 3.** Rich stated that he would be leaving the State throughout the winter season. Rich reminds the Board that his seat is the non-city resident business/property owner within City limits.  
  
The Board agreed to recommend advertising for his soon to be open seat.
  
- 4. Announcements by Chair.**  
None.
  
- 5. M/S M.B. Hansen/R. Hansen to recommend approval of Minutes for March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2019.**  
Motion passed (3-0)
  
- 6. Planning/Zoning –Report for March 2019**  
Smith reviewed the Zoning report for March noting the total valuation of building permits and the one freestanding sign permit.
  
- 7.** The Board unanimously approved to recommend calling for a public hearing on May 20th, 2019 at the Planning Commission meeting; to hear public comment on the adoption of Ordinance 2019-02 adding Transitional Housing Standards to the Walker City Code.
  
- 8.** The Board unanimously approved to recommend calling for a public hearing on May 20th, 2019 at the Planning Commission meeting; to hear public comment on the adoption of Ordinance 2019-03 amending Signs of the Walker City Code.

9. Consider strategies for implementation of the 2019 Tasks from the Comprehensive Plan.
  - **Ensure that views of Leech Lake are maintained from public rights of way as much as possible throughout the community.**  
 ONGOING/AS NEEDED. Public Works have cleared brush/trees that create line of sight issues. Clearing ROW at the public water access on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street is ongoing. Add discussion on Public Works agenda to evaluate trees or any other line of sight issues on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street South.
  - **Continue to work with other cities in Cass County to request that the county modify its approach to zoning around cities to coordinate commercial development efforts with the investments of its municipalities.**  
 ONGOING/AS NEEDED. Hansen stated this is basically asking the County not to make it too easy someone to go outside the City limits. Have input with the County and townships when possible.  
 City Planner will continue to work with other Cities in Cass County so that Cass County will keep the commercial developments efforts with the investments of its municipalities.
  - **Perform and maintain a full inventory of all publicly-maintained infrastructure.**  
 Done. This has been completed; will continue to be ongoing.
  - **Annually update a business inventory to measure the success of the City's policies and strategies in promoting a wide variety of businesses and employers in the area.**  
 Smith stated that she has received a copy of Leech Lake Area Chamber of Commerce's business inventory. The Board requested to review the inventory list.  
 Wilkening mentions a discussion that he had with a Park Rapids Councilmember in regards to a Staff member that they have for the City of Park Rapids that used to be employed by the Bemidji HRDC and what they have accomplished with housing in the last several years.  
 Wilkening stated that the City needs housing; affordable and retirement. Wilkening will contact Mike Paulus and discuss it with EDC and see if we can do something that Park Rapids is doing. Rich Hansen suggested the possibility of contracting with a firm rather than having a full time employee.
  - **Establish a task force to work with School District 113 on ways the City and the District can work cooperatively to increase enrollment and reduce costs.**  
 The Board states that this correlates with housing. The more people; higher enrollment.
  - **Establish a task force to work with Shingobee and Turtle Lake townships on sharing funding of important services that will benefit the area.**  
 We have this.

- **Continue to maintain and enforce ordinances for handling garbage and outside storage so as to keep properties neat.**

This is enforced and ongoing.

- **Provide business loans, loan guarantees and tax incentives to businesses seeking to renovate in the downtown, so long as the renovation is complimentary to the existing, pedestrian-oriented development pattern.**

Wilkening stated the City has a history working with abatement, TIF and direct business loans. The direct business loans fell apart due to the fact that repayment of seed money was never paid back to the City.

Rich Hansen questioned if this could be done through an assessment as a guarantee. As long as it gets paid back it's an inexpensive way for the City to fund renovation of downtown. Rich stated that the State had offered a few programs like this, but they tend to be a very complicated process. There were some requirements that made it erroneous to move forward with it.

Wilkening explains that TIF is a financing tool that allows a government agency to take a negotiated portion that works for both the City and the developer to help fill a financing void for the property owners. If it is appropriately used it can be a great thing.

Is there a feasible way to provide business loans/loan guarantees that you could assess on the property and be repayable over a period of a number years? Revitalize the revolving loan fund if possible.

- **Review and amend existing zoning ordinances so as to ensure that the City balances necessary regulations with the flexibility for property owners to maintain and build structures that contribute to the City's unique character.**

ONGOING. This Board does this.

- **Work with Shingobee Township to standardize industrial development standards between the city and the town.**

Wilkening explained that the thought process; because we are surrounded by Shingobee Township that there would be standard zoning within an 'x' perimeter around. Wilkening stated that some City's do that when going through the annexation process; bringing up the City of Bemidji and Northern Township as an example.

Rich stated that this is more so to discourage businesses from leaving the City limits for a less regulatory location. Keeping the zoning the same would kind of eliminate the benefit for moving out of the industrial park or City limits.

- **Provide space for a joint outdoor ice skating/skate park facility.**

Wilkening stated that we have a space; it will depend whether or not we will develop it.

- **Establish a joint working group with Cass County to re-evaluate options for use of the Ah-Gwah-Ching site. Seek possible opportunities for the site including mixed use redevelopment, higher education institutions and/or scientific research that leverages the natural assets of Leech Lake and the area's natural environment.**

ONGOING.

**10. Discussion on the proposed zoning classification of the parcel that the Library currently sits on.**

The Board agrees to leave the zoning classification as Multifamily Residential (MFR) until if and when a decision on the proposed Library building being built on the existing parcel or moving to another location.

**11. Chair Wilkening adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m.**