

**WALKER PLANNING COMMISSION
BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 24th, 2018
6:00 p.m. 701 Elm Avenue Walker Fire Hall Meeting Room**

1. Call to Order 6:06 p.m. by Wilkening

Roll Call-

Members Present: Randy Carlson, Gary Wilkening, Annie McMurrin and Susan Ostlund

Members Absent: Rich Hansen

Public: None

Staff: Pamela Smith

2. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda.

None

3. Announcements by Chair.

Justin Burslie from Sourcewell will meet with the Planning Commission at the October 29th meeting to discuss the overlay district ordinance.

4. M/S Ostlund/Carlson to recommend approval of Minutes for August 27th, 2018.

Motion passed (3-0)

5. Planning/Zoning –Report for August 2018

Smith reviewed the report with the Planning Commission.

Wilkening questioned the permit for the Walker Bay Boulevard Condos and whether or not it is expired. Smith stated that she spoke with Jon Stewart and he would be contacting the current contractor on the project and would update Pam on Wednesday the 26th in regards to the possible expiration of the building permit. Smith explained that if the permit is good for one year from the date approved if expired we require them to reapply for the remainder of the work to be finished.

Wilkening questioned the status of the house on 2nd Street. He updated the Board on the Council action to extend the permit.

Wilkening-Has there been any conversation with Jon regarding that?

Smith replied that she has not been involved in any conversation regarding the current progress.

Wilkening explained that the building permit has been extended several times and then the Council approved for it to be extended throughout the remainder of the last permit.

Smith stated that she believed the current permit is good through October. Wilkening requested that he update the Council at the October meeting or update Terri so she could update the Council at the October meeting.

6. **M/S Ostlund/Carlson** to recommend approval of the 2019 Land Use Calendar meeting & deadline dates.
Motion passed (3-0)

7. **Public Hearing to hear public comment on the proposed adoption of a Disposition Policy; to provide a comprehensive policy, process and guidelines for disposing of City of Walker real estate.**

Public hearing opened at 6:11 p.m.

Wilkening questioned the public present if he was there for the public hearing. He said he was here to attend the entire meeting. He introduced himself as Seth Liefer married to Shelly Johnson; Carrie Johnson's sister. He moved to Walker in March. Wilkening questioned if he had interest in this type of activity. Liefer explained that he has been a real estate appraiser doing residential work until about 15 years ago and now does commercial and works for the Minnesota Department of Transportation. He stated that he is interested in what is going on in Walker and curious about the possible relocation of SuperOne.

McMurrin arrived during the public hearing. Wilkening updated her, stating that the only public here is Mr. Liefer and he isn't here for the public hearing. He questioned Smith if any written comments were submitted. Smith replied that she had no written comments or phone calls in regard to this public hearing.

No public comments or questions were heard in regards to the proposed disposition policy.

Public hearing closed at 6:14 p.m.

8. **M/S Carlson/Ostlund to recommend approval of the Disposition Policy to City Council.**

Carlson stated that he is glad this is where we are at on this and thinks that it is needed. He explained to Liefer how this policy came to fruition. A piece of City property sold and nobody seemed to know about it. One of the adjoining properties may or may not have been interested in purchasing it. We drafted this policy to outline how we would let the public know if there is potential City property for sale.

Wilkening explained that there are extra components in this policy to direct City staff overtime to make an inventory of that property and be able to identify its potential needs or uses. Wilkening stated that one item that he has thought about in conjunction with this policy is the Essentia medical building that the City is a part of. That could be a conversation to have within the frame of this document. Questioning: Is that an important City function anymore or is that something we want to continue to be a part of or do we sell it?

McMurrin added that there are smaller pieces of City property that seems useless to the City but may benefit an adjacent property owner.

Liefer questioned if there is something in the draft that prior to public sale would let the City look at it and say there is a public benefit through nonprofit; maybe put that out

there as requests for proposal for usage of public land for building a shelter or something else. Wilkening responded that definitely could be a component of it. Liefer added that way you could make good use of the land you already own and promote projects that are in the Comprehensive Plan.

Ostlund stated that they have had conversations regarding that, adding if there is a bigger benefit to the City of Walker; best use as opposed to best offer. Wilkening clarified if there is more benefit to the property than just the value in dollars.

Motion passed (4-0)

9. 2017-2018 checklist to monitor progress on plan implementation of the Walker Comprehensive Plan.

Wilkening explained the reason behind the implementation task review and how it sets the course or the plan on where the City is heading.

Ostlund questioned the following task:

Continue to emphasize the maintenance of sidewalks and curbs so as to ensure an attractive appearance.

Ostlund questioned if it was public works working with the businesses to keep them clean?

Wilkening stated that sidewalks are owned and maintained by the property owners. There are portions that have public involvement and there are portions where sidewalks go across alleys and that would be the City portion. The City has started a fund for sidewalk replacement. We try to do that in conjunction with our road projects. Most of the curb and gutter we have in the City is in poor condition. If you replace a sidewalk and you do not replace the curb and gutter, when the road overlay comes in you could have problems with the water drainage and eating away at the asphalt; it weakens the material and water starts to leak through. What we are trying to do is replace sidewalks at the same time we are doing street upgrades. Wilkening added that main street sidewalk is probably in the worst condition because of the age and the way they cut it apart and put the bricks in there for power lines. According to MnDot it would not be until 2024 before a road project would happen and we really can't do that without MnDot's approval. We have another round of it happening with our Northside project and that would take care of Cleveland, 4th Street, 6th Street and parts of 3rd that go by Dairy Queen area.

Ostlund questioned if public works reminds the business owners that they need to clean their sidewalks.

Wilkening stated that Wayne does more so than public works. He asked if she was talking about summer or winter.

She said she was talking about the gum and debris.

Carlson questioned the following task:

Continue to evaluate the needs of the Community Center and determine whether public involvement in the project is warranted.

Carlson asked what is happening with the Community Center right now. Wilkening suggested to Liefer that the Community Center would be a good group if he wanted an active role in.

Carlson stated that he remembers when he was on the Planning Commission when the Community Center was ready to build and that the Planning Commission would advise the City to not help them financial because we did not think it would work. The Eveleth hockey rink has closed because they couldn't make it. Randy stated that his comment was, 'If they couldn't make it and that was Hockey Town USA then how can Walker make it without a pool?' Ostlund replied that pools are two and a half million dollars to build and the Community Center was built with a spot if the money could be raised there is an extension that can go into a pool.

Ostlund stressed that Community Centers can have amazing benefits to a City. I have come to believe without the participation of the School, City, County or Townships; it is very difficult for them to make it. Ostlund added that they could have just built a hockey rink but they wanted to build something for the community as opposed to just a hockey rink.

McMurrin stated that she believes that they did it too big to start out and with no clear thought process on how they were going to maintain that without donations. You can't keep nickeling and diming people to death in a community.

Ostlund responded that it would be great if the area townships and the City could partner with them.

McMurrin stated that Shingobee Township offered to grate the entire area as well as bring in class five for them but were turned down because they said they were going to pave it.

Carlson stated that the Planning Commission at the time gave them a waiver to not pave the parking lot because it was a huge expense. Carlson questioned if they have approached Sanford or Essentia about naming rights.

Wilkening stated that he went to a meeting they had and was invited to the next meeting. I made some comments and suggestions and asked for copies of their agendas and that has never occurred, I have reached out to them several times to find out when their meetings are. Wilkening added it was almost like they didn't want me specifically at their meeting or maybe they just didn't want anyone there. Carlson stated that the way it is setup they should have the exercise room available 24 hours a day.

Liefer suggested they coordinate events and promote to the local outdoor type business and hold horseback riding lessons, bait your hook, archery lessons at the Community Center.

Ostlund stated that she believes that they need somebody up there that is a very good marketer or promoter; I think that is what they have been lacking over the years.

McMurrin stated that people in the beginning wanted to support it but they expected the Community Center to become self-sufficient to some point. But they never did. She added that people feel like it is a drain on the community more than a benefit.

Ostlund-I have to disagree, their hockey tournaments bring a lot of people to the town that spend money and eat all winter long.

The Commission discussed the outdoor ice-rink and what is currently being offered by the City to help defer the cost of electric. The City has offered to match the hockey association to help pay the electric at the warming building and lights outside by the outdoor rink. Wilkening clarified that the City and the Hockey Association would split the cost.

Ostlund-So the City is still willing to pay Dewey and needs a match to figure out the electrical?

Wilkening-We have already approved that. We just need to figure out what that amount is and how to make it work.

Liefer suggested a day care service at the Community Center to offer to visitors of the community.

Ostlund questioned if the county willingly works with the City. Wilkening questioned if it was in regard to the zoning around the City and as far as he sees the County has been reasonably open. Wilkening added that Josh Stevenson the Administrator has been easily accessible. He added that he has emailed him several times and had received prompt replies and to the point answers. I see the County as a good partner to the City.

Ensure that the views of Leech Lake are maintained from public rights of way as much as possible throughout the community.

Wilkening stated that he thinks this is something we are never going to complete. It is ongoing. McMurrin added that she thinks that our Public Works Department does a wonderful job at keeping the view of Leech Lake open. Carlson added that when the guys cleared the area by the boat landing and the condos and was amazed about how much it opened up and how nice it looked.

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.

Wilkening stated that they are trying to keep as many businesses' as possible in the City rather than the County. That is something that we haven't worked on. McMurrin questioned what cities they would approach. Wilkening stated Remer, Pine River, Lake Shore and Nisswa.

Perform and maintain a full inventory of all publicly maintained infrastructure.

Wilkening stated this is ongoing. We can make this a priority for 2019 and complete the land inventory.

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.

Wilkening notes good job on getting that started.

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 discussed how this was even possible. The Board agreed that it should read as *Establish a task force to work with School District 113 on ways the City and the District can work cooperatively on any issue that City and the District can work together on.* We can't change the Comprehensive Plan but we can add notes as to what we intended to do.

Establish a task force to work with Shingobee and Turtle Lake townships on sharing funding of important services that will benefit the area.

This is ongoing. This is one of Annie's committees.

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

Carlson suggested an annual curb-side pickup. McMurrin clarified that we do that with leaves and brush. Wilkening added that we promote the hazardous waste drop off locations by notice in our water bills. Wilkening stated that we are a complaint based City. Wayne will give them notice if considered a nuisance.

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.

Ostlund questioned if that meant TIF. Wilkening answered that is one of them. We did a program with the State where it was low or no interest loans. It was a grant where you could do roofing, siding, windows and heating systems. We worked in conjunction with the City of Hackensack; houses and businesses. When opportunities come along we offer them.

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.

We have done this. Part of our Rural Residential is part of this and the overlay district. This is on-going.

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

That is really important to rethink that wording. They go by the County; Shingobee doesn't deal with Land Use issues at all. The zoning group that would apply to this is the County.

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

McMurrin stated that Turtle Lake and Shingobee offered to pay for everything and we never did that. Wilkening stated that that might be a perfect opportunity to get it done for next year. Wilkening questioned if that was a Parks issue or Public Works/Economic Development issue? McMurrin believes it is both.

Townships want the skating rink back in town. She describes the area that is called the old mini-golf/chicken shack area. Wilkening stated that he will bring this to public works and get it done.

Establish a joint working group with Cass County to reevaluate 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.

This is on-going. Cass County and the School District have been looking/talking about that area. Wilkening stated that it needed to get put back to use; hopefully part of it to the tax base and part of it to use for the community.

10. Wilkening adjourned the meeting at 7:08 p.m.