Big Lake City Council Workshop Minutes
Date: July 24, 2019
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BIG LAKE CITY COUNCIL
WORKSHOP MINUTES
JULY 24, 2019

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Wallen called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Council Members present: Seth Hansen, Rose Johnson, Paul Knier, Mike Wallen, and Scott Zettervall. Also present: City Administrator Clay Wilfahrt, Finance Director Deb Wegeleben, City Clerk Gina Wolbeck, Community Development Director Hanna Klimmek, Police Chief Joel Scharf, City Planner Michael Healy, City Engineer Layne Otteson, Code Enforcement Intern Lorrie McKee, Liquor Store Manager Greg Zurbey, and Consultant City Engineer Jared Voge from Bolton and Menk.

3. PROPOSED AGENDA

Council Member Hansen motioned to adopt the proposed Agenda as presented. Seconded by Council Member Knier, unanimous ayes, agenda adopted.

4. BUSINESS

4A. Bee Keeping Ordinance Review

Lorrie McKee reviewed prior Council discussions on implementing a bee keeping ordinance. On July 10th, Council directed Staff to prepare a draft ordinance based off of the City of Maplewood’s ordinance. McKee reviewed the draft ordinance language that would include setback requirements but no permit requirement, noting that the rules would only be enforced in response to nuisance complaints. McKee also presented a draft native plantings ordinance that was put together by Staff in 2018 stemming from Council discussions in 2016 and 2017 where Council expressed support for finding ways for the City to be more pollinator friendly. Staff asked for Council feedback on the proposed ordinance language for both bee keeping, and native plantings.

Council Member Johnson stated that she has heard from three people, one in support and two who are opposed to the City allowing bee keeping due to allergy concerns. Johnson acknowledged that bees do exist in nature, and that the existing code regulations restrict the number of bees. Johnson noted that she feels the new language would regulate bee “farms” as an accessory use. She noted that bees are very territorial and can become aggressive when protecting their hive. Johnson also stated that she doesn’t like the complaint process the City follows, and that she would like to see a neighbor notification process built into the new rules. Healy clarified that a notification would require a permitting process. Johnson stressed that she
doesn’t want this to be staff intensive. Discussion was held that the only way to regulate bee keeping per lot is to require an IUP and have an animal control person on staff.

Council Member Zettervall discussed the potential for allergy concerns, and asked where we draw the line. Zettervall doesn’t have a problem with the draft language as written.

Council Member Knier stated that he doesn’t have a problem with allowing bee keeping, noting that if it works for Maplewood, it will work for Big Lake. Knier stressed that it’s their own personal property, and if the bees become a nuisance, the nuisance can be addressed.

Council Member Hansen stated that he is fine with allowing bee keeping, noting how difficult it is to establish bee hives.

Mayor Wallen stated that he is not opposed to allowing bee keeping, but that more discussion is needed on proactively managing this type of use. Michael Healy reviewed options available, noting that we could do a handout similar to what we did with allowing chickens. Healy also noted that Maplewood’s ordinance allows bee keeping in all zoning districts. Council directed that only single-family and duplex properties be allowed to do bee keeping, and that the final ordinance should prohibit bee keeping at multi-family properties. The general consensus of the Council was to move forward with a bee keeping ordinance for consideration at a future meeting.

Healy reviewed the proposed native plantings ordinance language, and reviewed setback requirements of various communities.

Council Member Hansen discussed the need to regulate native plantings to a garden area.

Council Member Johnson discussed limiting native plantings to a garden area. Johnson stated that she is in favor of allowing native plantings with setback requirements. Johnson discussed her concern with poor aesthetics if we don’t regulate setbacks.

Council Member Knier noted that the City’s weed inspector would investigate complaints. Knier stated that he doesn’t have a problem with someone doing native plantings throughout their entire yard if it’s done well.

Council Member Zettervall stated that he is in support of allowing native plantings with established setbacks. Zettervall noted that setback requirements would help prevent encroachment onto a neighboring property.

The general consensus of the Council was to move forward with a native plantings ordinance.

4B. Commercial Vehicle Parking Discussion

Lorrie McKee reviewed the planners report relating to regulations on large commercial vehicles parked in residential neighborhoods. McKee noted that law enforcement and the Community Development Department have received numerous complaints regarding parking of these types of vehicles in residential neighborhoods. While enforcing this code in response to complaints,
there has been strong push back from the residents who are in violation. These residents have requested that the City Council review the current ordinance. Community Development had been asked to prepare a discussion memo for review at a Council Workshop. McKee reviewed rules in other communities similar to Big Lake, and found that almost all of these cities prohibit parking of large commercial vehicles in these types of neighborhoods. The only city in the region that was found to allow parking of these types of vehicles was the City of Fridley, which most of their neighborhoods are decades older than most of Big Lake’s neighborhoods resulting in very different development patterns. McKee also noted that Fridley is one of the only communities in the region that does proactive code enforcement and employs a staff with the equivalent of nearly 5 full-time code enforcement officers. An officer visits each property once a year to perform a zoning compliance check, and they aggressively enforce their zoning rules. McKee reviewed past discussions at the Planning Commission, and Staff expects that the Planning Commission would recommend that the City Council keep the ordinance as-is and continue enforcement. If that recommendation were given, Council would need to overrule the recommendation in order to revise the ordinance. McKee reviewed the options before Council including leaving the ordinance as-is, or discuss potential revisions to the prohibition of large commercial vehicle parking in residential districts. Clay Wilfahrt presented written comments from Big Lake resident Larry Sundberg regarding concerns with allowing these types of vehicles in residential neighborhoods and asking Council to be more pro-active in code enforcement efforts.

Joel Scharf reviewed the need to make a workable solution to allow persons in this industry to park their vehicles on their lots, noting that currently there is no on-street parking allowed for these types of vehicles. Scharf noted that we already allow RVs, trucks, etc., and reviewed ordinances that are in place to regulate when vehicles can be run. Scharf suggest that some type of compromise be reached. Healy explained that up until 2 to 3 years ago, these large vehicles were allowed to be parked on City streets. Healy also explained that currently, vehicles classified as class 1 and 2, and parts of class 3 are allowed to be parked at residential properties. Healy also noted that aesthetic rules are hard to enforce without a permitting process.

Council Member Johnson stressed that what happens on a neighbors personal property can affect a neighboring property. Johnson stated that some type of regulation with screening requirements is needed. Johnson also discussed that the City of Monticello has a designated public lot for parking of private tractors/trailers.

Council Member Knier commented that he has had discussions with a resident who has a concern about prohibiting parking on personal property. Knier noted that the City is striving to be a business friendly community, and we could possibly attract residents from neighboring communities who don’t allow this type of parking. Knier stated that if parking is allowed, some type of parameters would be needed.

Council Member Zettervall discussed whether this is an aesthetics concern. Healy noted that most complaints filed have been based on aesthetics concerns. Zettervall commented that he approves of restricting parking on City streets, but that we should be allowing the parking of these types of vehicles on personal property with specific regulations.
Council Member Hansen stated that it is better to allow parking on personal property, versus on
the road. Hansen also discussed the possibility of offering the Sherburne County owned parking
lot on Humboldt Drive for business owners to use for parking.

Mayor Wallen recommended we send this discussion to the Planning Commission for a
recommendation. Council Member Zettervall noted that there has already been a lot of
discussion on this topic at the Planning Commission level and it is expected that their
recommendation would come back as very restrictive.

The general consensus of the Council was to move this discussion to the Planning Commission
to research alternatives for control and to provide a recommendation to Council.

4C.  New Ideas Discussion – No new ideas brought forward.

5.  OTHER – No other discussion was held.

6.  ADJOURN

Council Member Hansen motioned to adjourn at 5:46 p.m. Seconded by Council Member
Zettervall unanimous ayes, motion carried.

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Gina Wolbeck             08/14/19
City Clerk              Date Approved By Council