

CITY OF FIFE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING

Fife City Hall

February 2, 2009
7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER –

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm with the following present:

Commissioners: Chairman Jim Call, Jeff Brown, Doug Fagundes, Richard Garchow, Fred Thomas, and Shannon Thornhill

Excused Absence: Donald Alveshere

Staff present: Planner 1 Chris Pasinetti, Code Enforcement Officer Chris Larson, and Senior Administrative Assistant Katie Bolam.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, to approve the minutes of January 5, 2009. Motion carried unopposed.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Heat Pump Screening Requirements

Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) Larson explained that a citizen complaint had led to considering regulating heat pump noise in the city. He explained what a heat pump is and that, since it is about 4 times more efficient than an air-conditioning unit, the city expects the permitting activity for them to go up and with them, the noise complaints. A heat pump sits outside the building and creates a noise level of 63-78 decibels (dB) measured at the nearest property line; the noise code limits dB output to 44-55. Therefore, staff is asking the Planning Commission for direction on the matter. Possible noise-reducing measures include fencing/landscaping, sound blankets, and mechanical alteration. Options for codifying include exempting heat pumps from the noise code or requiring noise-reduction measures to comply with existing code.

Commissioner Brown asked about existing units. Chairman Call suggested a grace period for compliance, perhaps 18 months to 2 years. Commissioner Thornhill would like a shorter grace period. Commissioner Fagundes asked at what distance the dB readings were taken (answer = property line, which would be approximately 15 feet at the smallest); he asked if that means the distance would have to be regulated. CEO Larson confirmed that, and, additionally, because of the necessity to cover window-mounted air-conditioners (because they are also located on the outside of a building) and heat pumps at condos and apartments, staff would prefer a blanket regulation that would guarantee compliance. Chairman Call agreed with that. Commissioner Fagundes commented that, in his experience with heat pumps, the further away from a building

they are located, the harder they have to work and the more noise they make. Commissioner Thomas suggested to deal only with complaints on existing pumps and require compliance for new units. Commissioner Fagundes suggested that the compliance measures become part of the necessary mechanical permit submittal information.

No action needed.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Sign Code Recommendation

Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) Larson gave a brief recap of this item and then went over the proposed code, pointing out what is different from last meeting:

- Freestanding sign vs. monument sign distinguished in this zone
- Sidewalk sign limited to time that business is open – discussion ensued regarding penalty for breaking this rule, ultimately agreeing on a fine for the first two offenses (defined as blatant disregard for law) and 30-day loss of sign privilege upon a third offense within a 12-month period.
- Window coverings – no specific regulation in the CMU zone
- Comprehensive Design Review – adds allowances for monument signs, flags and banners, and changeable letter signage – discussion ensued regarding other items included under the comprehensive design review, especially regarding the size of allowable signs

Chairman Call moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, to recommend to City Council that the enforcement of the A-board policy be monetary the first 2 offenses with a revocation of sign privileges on the 3rd offense. Before a vote occurred, Chairman Call amended the motion to include Exhibit A into the sign code. Both votes passed unanimously.

b. Zoning Review – Subcommittee Report

Planner Pasinetti reported on the January 26 meeting of the zoning subcommittee. Staff suggested, and the subcommittee agreed, to take the many recommendations from last year's work and concentrate on those that would have greater impact in the short term. Recommendations are based on creating the most compatibility within and between zones, and the inclusion of affordable housing for lower and middle income ranges. He then began a page-by-page overview of the recommended code for Regional Commercial (RC), High Density Residential (HDR) and Planned Development Regulations (PRD).

Commissioner Thornhill suggested the addition of the word "limited" to the purpose statement prior to the words, "variety of housing densities and types". Chairman Call asked if a residence

is allowed in the Industrial zone. Planner Pasinetti answered that it is if it is a guardhouse. He also stated that maintaining the rights of existing homeowners still is part of the code. There was concurrence to strike ADU from the table of 19.44.050 after some discussion. Commissioner Thomas asked about 3,000 sf minimum lot size referenced in 19.28.050, stating that it is too small to consider in a zone where a triplex is the smallest density level allowed. Commissioner Brown disagreed, stating that if he had a 3,000 sf lot and was able to put a triplex on it and meet all stipulations, he ought to be able to do so. Much discussion ensued, with a final decision to leave it as is. Chairman Call initiated discussion on affordable housing. Planner Pasinetti said that, if the commission would like, he can come back with data and analysis on how Pierce County defines “affordable housing,” with statistics on costs, and perhaps even bring in a representative from the Tacoma Pierce County Housing Authority or the Affordable Housing Consortium to address the commission. The commissioners were very much in favor of that, with vocal encouragement by commissioners Brown, Thomas and Thornhill, so Planner Pasinetti will do that.

Chairman Call moved, seconded by Commissioner Fagundes, to recommend to City Council the High Density Residential and Regional Commercial texts with suggested amendments. The vote passed unanimously.

STAFF REPORT

a. Wapato Creek Restoration plans

Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) Larson explained that staff met with a representative of Natural Systems Designs regarding the City’s overall goal to bring Wapato to a state of health. Chairman Call gave a history of Wapato Creek in Fife, adding that if we treat it right it will be a real benefit to our community. Senior Administrative Assistant Bolam said that Acting Director Durham wanted the commission to know of his commitment to restore the Wapato to the best of his ability over the course of the next 3-4 years.

PROFESSIONAL INTEREST ITEMS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Thornhill, to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.