

CITY OF FIFE
PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF MEETING

Fife City Hall

March 2, 2009
7:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER –

The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm with the following present:

Commissioners: Chairman Jim Call, Jeff Brown, Doug Fagundes, Richard Garchow, Fred Thomas, and Donald Alveshere

Excused Absence: Shannon Thornhill

Staff present: Planner 1 Chris Pasinetti and Senior Administrative Assistant Katie Bolam.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

Commissioner Garchow asked for clarification of the vote on item 3A, Sign Code Recommendation. Because Code Enforcement Officer Larson is not present, it was decided that Assistant Bolam would locate and read from the meeting notes. Discussion was therefore tabled until later in the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

a. Affordable Housing

Planner Pasinetti explained the GMCC Affordable Housing report included in the packets. Pierce County projects that Fife will need 320 additional units of affordable housing by the year 2022.

Chairman Call stated that smaller homes on 4,000-5,000 sf lots are needed, defined as “starter homes” by Planner Pasinetti. Commissioner Thomas is concerned that we’ve reached the point where dirt is too expensive for that. Chairman Call countered that, while we hear that said, we’ve also heard that 10 years ago. He then suggested that each commissioner give an opinion of the type of affordable housing he’d like to see.

- Chairman Call – since there are so many apartments available, he sees a lack in Single Family Residential affordable homes in the \$250,000 range
- Commissioner Alveshere – says that affordable housing should not be isolated but should be incorporated into various neighborhoods – he likes to see a mix such as that offered at Radiance – he says when affordable housing is isolated it often becomes a run-down area – contrast that with Section 8 developments that are often sprinkled through a mix of neighborhoods with good results

- Commissioner Garchow – asked for clarification – by 2022 we need 320 more affordable housing units? – Planner Pasinetti answered that this is just a forecasted number and this report is just a Draft version and should serve as food for thought, at least until we see what Pierce County Council decides

Chairman Call stated that one thing wrong is the disappearance of mobile homes, suggesting that the City should look into assuring retainage of the last mobile home park, Ardena Gale. Commissioner Garchow commented that bank financing is tough for those, as people own the home but not the land.

Commissioner Thomas commented that we probably don't have the right to tell builders what they can and can't build – however, as the planning commission, we can set boundaries. Commissioner Garchow agreed, saying look at the city's attempt to bring a grocery store to the property at 70th and 20th.

Discussion turned to incentives. Chairman Call asked about the hilltop area of Tacoma, wondering who's financing the small lot 2-story development there. Planner Pasinetti commented that one thing that Tacoma has done is offer a 10-year tax abatement. Commissioner Alvesshere stated that support from Council would be crucial for any incentive strategy. Planner Pasinetti referred to HUD and form-based zoning. Commissioner Garchow said that of the 1300 HUD housing units in Pierce County, 300 are here in Fife (Chateau Rainier); the purpose of this is subsidized and guaranteed payments.

Chairman Call asked where Fife would put 320 affordable housing units. Planner Pasinetti suggested that both the Regional Commercial and the Community Mixed Use zones have virtually no density limits.

Chairman Call asked if we'll be seeing a 9-story hotel soon, referring to the new Ramada plans – Planner Pasinetti said no, due to parking restrictions, it will be a 4-story.

Commissioner Fagundes spoke of the past tendency for people to buy starter homes that were a little bigger to fit a growing family, and then downsizing as kids graduate. But those 2 bdrm/1 bath homes for downsizing are disappearing. Chairman Call said manufactured homes have evolved and become well-designed. Commissioner Garchow asked to clarify that those are already allowed – Planner Pasinetti answered yes, double-wide/composite roof, etc.

No action needed.

STAFF REPORT

a. Choose Planning Commission representative for Loading Door Tax Stakeholder's meetings

Planner Pasinetti explained that there will be stakeholder meetings with regard to the proposed tax on loading doors, and council has requested a Planning Commission representative to take part in those discussions. Chairman Call and Commissioner Alveshere both expressed interest. Commissioner Garchow explained the basis of the tax. Discussion included concern over whether the tax will be sufficient enough to make sense, how to create revenue from trucking-related businesses who don't have loading doors, the problem of penalizing the very businesses the city "courted" to come here in the first place, the idea of instating the B&O tax instead, and the importance of keeping business/commerce moving forward through smooth roadways. Chairman Call rescinded his interest in the committee in favor of the priority expressed by Commissioner Alveshere – all commissioners agreed to his representation. Each commissioner then stated his opinion on the tax for Commissioner Alveshere to take forward:

- Fagundes in favor of the tax
- Thomas opposed to the tax, feeling it penalizes businesses that the city "courted"
- Call in favor of the tax, with reservations – thinks there's a more effective way
- Brown in favor of the tax, with reservations due to insufficient revenue
- Garchow opposed to the tax, because of the insufficient revenue
- Alveshere in favor of the tax, as it's a good place to start

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

It was decided to table until next meeting the approval of the February 2nd minutes until the actual wording and meaning of the motion on the Sign Code Recommendation could be ascertained from the recording of the meeting and by speaking with Code Enforcement Officer Larson.

PROFESSIONAL INTEREST ITEMS

There were none.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Brown moved, seconded by Commissioner Thomas, to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. Motion carried 6-0.