

REGULAR MEETING OF THE OWOSSO PLANNING COMMISSION

April 28, 2008

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Wascher at 7:17p.m.

Roll Call was taken by Anita Kimbrough, Assessing Assistant.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Bruff, Tracy Butcher, Burton Fox, Sandy Harvey, Terry Kemp and, Bill Wascher.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dallas Lintner, Frank Livingston, and Cheryl McCormick-Voss.

MINUTES:

It was moved by Commissioner Harvey and supported by Mayor Bruff to approve the minutes of the meeting of March 24, 2008 as presented.

YEAS: All, Motion Carried

NAYS: None

COMMISSIONER/CITIZEN COMMENTS:

No citizen comments.

Commissioner Fox noted that he feels that it is great for the Commission to meet even if the agenda is empty. He noted that there are many new opportunities with the Vibrant Small Cities Grant for the Planning Commission to be an active decision-making entity.

ITEMS OF BUSINESS:

John Archer started the meeting by noting that there are not a lot of planning projects coming up, and he is anticipating many empty or very light agendas in the future. He did mention that there would be some planning activity needed for the 6 facades for the VSC Grant, the project at Curwood Castle Park, and the Armory & Water-Exchange-Ball St. parking lots. Other than those, Mr. Archer is looking for input from the Commissioners for items to discuss when an agenda is empty or very light.

Commissioner Harvey said that she would like the Commission to look into items that would promote more energy efficient or 'green' options. She used the example of a business owner wanting to erect a windmill to supplement their energy usage, and how the Commission may have to consider adding to the ordinances for such projects. Mr. Archer indicated that there are some proposed sample ordinances available from the State that they could review.

Mayor Bruff brought up the issue of outside wood burners. Mr. Archer noted that as a city we couldn't outlaw the wood burners because that would supersede the State of Michigan Building codes. He noted that we would only be able to set parameters. Mayor Bruff added that looking at the actual burning ordinance of the City might be an option. Mr. Archer also noted that there are grants available through the State of Michigan for citizens to upgrade old wood burners to the new efficient types that burn the smoke again to remove particulates.

Mayor Bruff said that he would like the Commission to revisit the OS-1 overlay zoning district, and whether it would be more beneficial to change this to a zoning for general business districts. Mr. Archer indicated that this overlay district is beneficial for obtaining mortgages for the property owners. Commission Wascher said that the Commission needs to be careful what they would change the zoning to because they would not want to open the area up for undesirable businesses.

Commissioner Harvey inquired about any ordinances that pertain to cemeteries and their maintenance. She specifically asked about road conditions within the cemeteries. Mr. Archer replied that he was uncertain, but that he would do some research on the subject.

Commissioner Fox inquired about a possible time limit set on the restoration and construction of the Lebowsky Center and the Wessner Building. He is concerned that they are eye sores that need to be completed. Mr. Archer stated that the only thing that is required is that the buildings be watertight and maintenance free. He also noted that these buildings do fall under the nuisance code for the City, and that there was a Notice and Order out on the Lebowsky Center to remove the east wall. Besides the buildings causing a public nuisance, no other actions can be taken to force occupancy.

Commissioner Fox next brought up the topic of the Commission voicing their opinion on a rental property inspection process for the City. Mr. Archer indicated that the Commission could present to the City Council their concerns. He also noted that any new program would have to be self funded due to budget issues. Charging for the rental inspections could solve these funding issues. Mayor Bruff added that there is an incentive for the landlords to get their property 'certified' by the City because they might be able to collect a higher rent. Commissioner Kemp offered the other side of the issue: to not make the inspections and parameters so cost prohibitive that this causes the landlords to lose their rentals. Mr. Archer said that the best way to get started would be with a registration of all the rental properties in the City. A registration fee would be charged to pay for the initial inspection, and a list of needed improvements could be provided. This process would create a template for handling future landlord and tenant disputes.

Commissioner Harvey made a motion to bring a rental registration process back for discussion to the next meeting. Commissioner Fox seconded the motion.

AYES: All, Motion Carried

NAYS: None

Commissioner Butcher inquired if the Commission should revert to their former meeting time of 7:30 pm. Commissioner Fox agreed that the Parks & Recreation Commission could use the additional time to complete their meetings. Mayor Bruff indicated that this would need to be presented and approved by the City Council. Mr. Archer said that he would draft a memorandum to the Council on the time change.

ADJOURNMENT:

It was moved by Commissioner Harvey and supported by Commissioner Fox to adjourn the meeting at 8:33pm.

AYES: All, Motion Carried

NAYS: None

Anita Kimbrough
Assessing Assistant