

CITY OF JEFFERSON
Joint Worksession of City Council & Planning Commission
September 7, 2023
6:30pm

COUNCILORS PRESENT: David Kellogg, David Watkins, Bob Rossiter, Chandra Cruikshank, Mayor Michael Myers, Charles Vickery

COUNCILORS ABSENT: Keonali Hutley

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: David Jones, Edie O’Neil, Walt Perry, Erica Curry (zoom)

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Justin Bridge, Jacquelyn Deeds

STAFF PRESENT: Sarah Cook, CM/R; Jeff Buskirk, PWD; Scott Whyte, COG Planner

I. CALL TO ORDER – Mayor Myers welcomed everybody, called the meeting to order at 6:30pm, and led in the flag salute. He provided a brief outline of the order of business before calling upon the City’s contract planner.

II. LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Scott Whyte introduced himself and provided some background before moving through a memo he had earlier provided, which was a compilation of state statute changes which impact the Jefferson code, in that the code either doesn’t address the topic at all, or was no longer current/accurate. Scott spoke on HB 3395 regarding middle housing, pointing out the change in population threshold to 2,500, which required the Jefferson code to comply. In short, the new law basically says anywhere a single family home is allowed outright, a duplex must also be allowed. While the City did update that portion of the code last year, there was still work to be done to ensure the requirements for duplexes and single family homes were one and the same; they could not be treated differently. Additionally, Scott pointed out a similar bill affecting manufactured home standards in much the same way. Mayor Myers commented that if they were going to create standards that were apples to apples, he hoped it would also include requirements that manufactured homes had front facing entrances and garages, like single family homes were required to have.

This opened up dialogue amongst the group with the conversation primarily about lot sizes, with some concerned about going smaller and having neighbors so close, and others not as concerned. Scott pointed out that a consideration could be to increase standards for single family homes, which would increase that of duplexes as well, because they had to be held to the same standard. Commissioner O’Neil pointed out additional parking standards would need to be considered too, and further questioned how these changes could affect drainage, to which the planner pointed out the drainage calculations were typically done in an earlier review process. Commissioner Curry spoke about the importance of keeping affordable housing in town and expressed worry that bigger lots would increase prices and locals would be priced out. She hoped the group would consider townhomes and cottage housing for those that preferred not to have a large property to maintain or the inability to afford anything else. Councilor Kellogg questioned how they could prevent a duplex from being built upon a smaller lot that was intended for a starter home, to which the planner explained a process called planned unit development, which he was not sure off hand if it was already in the code or not. Essentially, it allowed the reduction of lot sizes for a development in exchange for setting aside common space for use by the development. Councilor Vickery spoke about his preference to have larger lot sizes, noting there was room to breathe, space from neighbors, and was one of the reasons his family moved to Jefferson. He felt that downsizing would bring a lot of other issues; parking being one of the biggest concerns, which all agreed.

Moving through his report, the planner also noted another change, which allowed for single room occupancy housing types, more commonly referred to as quads with private sleeping rooms and shared common areas. The JMC did not currently have language for that type of housing; therefore, that would be a new definition and section added. Councilor Rossiter asked for clarification on language pertaining to the requirement of local governments to allow 6 units on lots that would allow 5, to which the planner indicated it would need to be a large lot, but he would review it. Last, Scott briefly explained HB 3197, requiring clear and objective standards and very defined criteria, black and white, not discretionary. Scott noted it was difficult for cities to defend what was not clear and objective.

Mayor Myers summarized some of the key points of interest that needed to be moved on, reviewed, or clarified, which included: increasing parking standards wherever applicable and allowed; verify language for Planned Unit Development and add to JMC if not there; update language on new duplex, manufactured home, and single room occupancy standards; and, allowance of up to 6 units on lots that would allow 5. Commissioner O'Neil wondered about getting community input on some of the topics that the City had the flexibility on: parking and lot sizes primarily, since the others were state mandates that the City needed to comply with. The group agreed town hall style gatherings would be beneficial.

Matthew Conser, descendent of Jacob Conser, was asked by the Mayor to be present and offer some information on the matter. He provided information on his extensive background in development, real estate, property management, and the like. He started with stating that he never used to be a big proponent of density, because he too wanted a larger lot, more space, no neighbors, etc. However, grandma might not; your kids might not, pointing out that things were evolving and times were changing. He explained his years long struggle with the City of Millersburg after he approached them in 2009 about developing his property with smaller lots, to which they were against and wouldn't budge. He ended up selling the property and moving on and now Millersburg was out of land. He highly encouraged the City to consider smaller lots, pointing out that until there were more rooftops in town to support commerce, businesses wouldn't come because they wouldn't be sustained. He felt cities should provide varying sizes of lots and homes because not everybody that lives in a town wants the same things, noting smaller homes/lots were appealing to kids just moving out of their parents house for the first time, or retired people who left years ago and want to come back.

Councilor Kellogg asked Mr. Conser's opinion on why nobody was developing the available land in the City, to which he explained his family had looked at the Posch property, had wanted to build apartments there, but they weren't highly desired in Jefferson and the restrictions that come with the wetland on the property drives the cost up so it doesn't pencil out, not to mention the current challenges with the interest rates. A developer needed predictability before building anywhere.

Michelle Nunes, resident and employee of Diversified Management (Conser property mgmt.) – commented about the number of calls she gets from people looking for smaller homes or lots, noting not everybody wanted a big house, or even a house at all. She thought that having a variety of housing options would be so beneficial for the younger generation that wanted to move out, but still be close to home/mom.

Mayor Myers pointed out to the group, he got his home, all that he wanted, and they all had theirs...but asked them to think about the next generation, because they didn't yet, and most of them wouldn't be able to afford to in the current climate. Of course, he agreed with preserving what the City had in terms of housing, but thought it was time for them to consider others and get out of the mindset of "this is what's good for me, so it must be good for everybody else." He would like to see the PC review the materials and changes that had been presented and discussed and consider what the next development phase will be, while keeping in mind our historic piece, noting it would be hard work.

Members of the City's Landmark's Advisory Board, Patti Ball and Marti Cheek, were present and handed out information about Certified Local Governments, which the City was designated as. They spoke about the work they were doing on updating their section of the code with support and information from SHPO. A map was displayed, which had been marked to identify all historic properties over 50 years old, and those that had received historic designation signs from the LAC. Mayor Myers noted they were doing good work and looked forward to the updates coming to the City Council.

III. **APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS PAYABLE** – Councilor Kellogg moved to approve, seconded by Councilor Vickery. All in favor: Ayes – 5, Opposed – 0. **APPROVED.**

IV. **VISITORS** – None

V. **ADJOURNMENT** – Councilor Kellogg moved to adjourn, seconded by Councilor Rossiter. All were in favor and the meeting closed at 8:48pm.

MINUTES APPROVED this 26th day of October, 2023.



Michael D. Myers, Mayor

ATTEST:



Sarah Cook, City Manager/Recorder