

Finance and Economic Development Committee Meeting
May 4, 2007

Present: Chair Mayor Sheckler, Councilmembers Carmen Scott and Susan White, Planning Manager Denise Lathrop, Code Enforcement Officer Nancy Uhrich, City Manager Tony Piasecki, City Attorney Pat Bosmans, and Planning, Building & Public Works Director Grant Fredricks.

The meeting convened at 10:35 am.

International Property Maintenance Code:

Discussion ensued regarding the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) and the process to make accurate additions and deletions to the code.

The Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) expressed her major concern is asking where is the level to decide when the CEO should enter residents' homes. Grant's input was to rely on the judgment of the CEO. Nancy informed the Committee that in the past, she would look at the outside of the residence for any damage or deteriorating conditions and then determine if she should enter.

Pat Bosmans suggested that this issue is either civil or criminal and that civil requires a warrant or permission from the tenant to go inside. Pat further suggested that the standards for civil enforcement should be written in order to enforce the issue.

Nancy assured the Committee that the tenant must go through the landlord/tenant laws first, and then they are able to invite the CEO into their residence.

During this discussion, Tony mentioned his concern with other chapters, stating that there are chapters and parts that are not coordinated in our code, and these must be clarified. He advised that there are probably holes in this code that should not be adopted, and that these must be researched individually.

Pat questioned if these actions should go through Municipal Court or Civil Court. Tony explained that they now go through the judge as a civil matter.

The Committee unanimously agreed that a procedure of taking small parts of the International Code at a time and revising them to fit our codes would be the obvious procedure.

Grant suggested that the Committee address their concerns, and he recommended that three issues be discussed and these should affect livability and safety concerns.

Tony injected that these concerns should include the type of violation where neighbors are in more harm than the actual resident. The Committee unanimously agreed with Tony's recommendations.

It was determined to have Nancy declare her top three concerns, which are as follows:

1. Noxious weeds and how to enforce it(Chapter 302.4)
2. Abandoned/vacated houses having a detrimental effect on the neighborhood (Chapter 301.3).
3. Vehicles and junk vehicles (Chapter 302.8).

Tony suggested discussing these issues and including items that may have an affect on the neighborhood, and he further mentioned that designing our own code may be a more efficient procedure.

Grant recommended that we pull out all other references in Title 13 so it will not be adopted by reference. He further suggested that each Ordinance be reviewed before bringing forward to the City Council.

Nancy announced that she would like to see a relocation ordinance adopted along with required fees.

Zoning Code Update:

Denise Lathrop, Planning Manager provided a proposed work program and schedule for completing the zoning code update. She gave an explanation of the memo for the Zoning Code Update and the required work to finish the update. She also discussed the work completed to date by Judith Kilgore (former Community Development Director) and some of the issues the City's consultant Tom Beckwith focused on related to the document organization, definitions, and land use tables.

Denise advised the Committee that Jason would like to be involved in the Administrative Code changes and that he has good ideas.

Denise indicated her goal was not to duplicate the work completed to date but rather move forward in refining the work and to cross check and make sure everything makes sense. She indicated that she would also be looking at recently updated zoning codes in neighboring jurisdictions and find out how they are working for those cities.

Denise stated that staff would be bringing the update to the Committee and Council in a similar format as the building code update (Work Packets). Staff agreed to provide a more detailed outline and work timeline for the next Finance and Economic Development Committee meeting.

Downtown Comp Plan Update:

Denise provided an overview of the activities occurring in 2007 will affect and shape the planning and development activities for downtown Des Moines (infrastructure planning, development regulations, the University of Washington Storefront Studio project, downtown design guidelines, and Main Street program). Denise indicated that these activities will provide the information necessary to update the Downtown Element of the Des Moines Comprehensive Plan and develop and designate a "Planned Action" for the Downtown subarea which includes downtown, the marina and Beach Park.

Councilmember Scott referenced the downtown concepts and explained the need to coordinate the communication between all of the groups that are working on the visioning for downtown. The various groups also need to understand their boundaries on all their ideas.

Denise felt that working with these groups is a good idea for the downtown vision project. She indicated that the City could partner with Destination Des Moines to garner support and community input in the downtown planning process. She stated that the Main Street program, which the City recently joined, has some good strategies for public involvement that she will be looking to for ideas.

It was also determined that it would be beneficial to add the Historical Society to these groups so Des Moines history could become an element to the downtown vision.

Further discussion ensued regarding other factors including height limits, parking and parking requirements for the downtown area. The Committee determined that identifying priorities and good opportunities would be a beneficial discussion. It would also be a wise idea to ask the City Council to give input on what they would like to see for the downtown project.

The next meeting of the Finance and Economic Development Committee is scheduled for May 18, 2007 at 1:30 pm.

The meeting concluded at 12:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Abeles
Administrative Assistant