

Minutes
Cheney Planning Commission
Regular Meeting – By Phone/Video Conference

March 8, 2021

Commissioners Attending: Richard Mount, Vara Lyn Conrath, Natasha Jostad, David Early, Jake Vibbert, Dan Turbeville, and Daniel Hillman.

Commissioners Absent: None.

Staff Attending: Brett Lucas, Mark Schuller, Todd Ableman and Susan Beeman.

Councilmembers Attending: Vince Barthels.

Call to Order: Chairman Mount called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Amending the Agenda: Chairman Mount announced that he would like to amend the agenda to include a discussion of the City's new interactive zoning map. Commissioner Turbeville made a motion that the agenda be amended as described, seconded by Commissioner Hillman, and the motion carried unanimously.

Minutes: Commissioner Hillman made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 8, 2021 regular meeting as distributed. Seconded by Commissioner Early, and the motion carried unanimously.

Citizen Participation: None.

Discussion Item: #2021-04
Amending R-3/R-3H Multi-Family Zoning Regulations

Mr. Lucas explained that we have been approached by several people to allow one bedroom or studio apartments to receive a density bonus to allow rounding up to 3 units on 5,000 sq.ft. lots in the R-3 zone. He noted that this would apply only to the R-3 zone, but the R-3 and R-3H zones are addressed in the same chapter, so the title to this item refers to both.

Mr. Lucas explained that under the current code, you can only have 2.4 units on a 5,000 sq.ft. lot, and rounding down, that means only 2 units. It does not make any difference whether it is a one-bedroom, two-bedroom, or three-bedroom unit – you may only have 2 units. There is interest in doing a density bonus to allow a maximum of 3 units on a 5,000 sq.ft. lot, if they are only one bedroom/one bathroom units.

Mr. Lucas showed a map illustrating the location of 5,000 sq.ft. lots in the R-3 zone which could potentially be impacted by this change. There are 31 parcels which could be impacted.

Mr. Ableman explained that we have older sections of town which were platted with 5,000 sq.ft. lots. Over time, some of those sections of town have become R-3 zoning, which is intended for a density of 23 units/acre. He explained that if you look at it, only two units could be a duplex on a 5,000 sq.ft. lot. We require one parking space per bedroom. Typically, there is room across the back of a 5,000 sq.ft. lot for 5 parking spaces. We are hearing from developers that instead of having multiple bedroom units, they would like to be able to put 3 one-bedroom or studio apartments on one of these smaller lots. Theoretically, the impact would be less to have the 3 studio or 1-bedroom units than to have a duplex with 5 or more bedrooms.

Mr. Ableman said that he is struggling with the concept of an R-3 zone, which suggests 3 units or more, but our present code only allows for a duplex on some of the lots.

Discussion followed. Chairman Mount asked for clarification on the location of potentially impacted parcels. Commissioner Early asked if these would be separate structures, or up to 3 attached units. Mr. Lucas said they would probably be townhouse-style units with a shared wall.

Chairman Mount asked if there would be room on the lots for green space. Mr. Lucas stated that the developer would have to meet all other code requirements, including the parking and landscape requirements, setbacks from property lines, and open space requirements.

Chairman Mount asked how many of the 31 parcels have existing structures on them. Mr. Lucas said that he was not sure, but could do some research and bring back an answer next month.

Commissioner Early asked if Mr. Lucas would send out a copy of the map following the meeting.

Commissioner Conrath commented that she thinks parking will be a problem, especially in the area of A & 6th Street. Commissioner Hillman stated that he did not see a compelling reason to make an exception, but we could look at it.

Chairman Mount added that one of the 31 parcels belongs to his parents and he is familiar with the area. If the structure was removed and replaced with a duplex, they would have to go up, because the site is not very large. Is this really feasible?

Mr. Lucas offered that the current code would allow a duplex with 2 or 3 bedrooms on one side, and 2 units on the other, with 5 parking spaces off the alley at the back of the lot. This proposal would allow three one-bedroom units, with a maximum of 3 parking spaces, so it would probably be less impact on the surrounding neighborhood than what is currently allowed.

Commissioner Conrath commented that one resident in that area parks in her front yard. Mr. Lucas said that at one time, multi-family development was allowed to provide required parking in the front yard, but that is no longer allowed for new development. If using the alley for access, the developer would also be required to pave the alley up to their parcel.

Commissioner Early asked who would provide snow removal in the alleys. Mr. Ableman explained that the City does not provide snow removal in alleys, unless it is a case of us not being able to get City equipment where it needs to go. Commissioner Early commented that residents will then be parking on the street in order to avoid having to shovel the alley. Mr. Ableman agreed, and suggested that at that point it becomes a behavior issue for enforcement purposes.

Mr. Lucas noted that there is nothing to prevent residents from parking on-street, except during snow removal periods. And residents are not allowed to park on the lawn. Code enforcement will address those situations, because parking must be on impervious surface.

Discussion Item: #2021-05

Zoning & Land Use Regulations for Cottage Housing Development

Mr. Lucas explained that the first draft of this code section was developed over a year ago by our Planning Intern, Tynan Stephenson. The reason we are looking at this type of ordinance is that the State Legislature is considering how to promote more affordable housing options across the state, and we are trying to get ahead of the curve in terms of how we might address it. The State is looking at allowing more accessory dwelling units, more cottage housing, more multi-family units – anything that would allow communities to provide more housing options for people who cannot afford to buy a house.

Mr. Lucas added that cottage housing seems particularly of interest to younger people who may be looking at a no-frills, minimalist lifestyle, with smaller units which hold less stuff.

The draft ordinance provides for cottage housing development only on R-3 zoned land, or on R-2 property that is at least 10,000 sq.ft. in size. The density would be no more than 16 units per acre, so on a ¼ acre parcel, you're probably looking at 4 cottage houses. The density would probably be less than what would be provided in a stick-built apartment.

Mr. Lucas said that the main questions staff is putting forth have to do with zoning: should these be allowed only in the R-3 zone, or should they be allowed in the R-2, also? And if so, should there be a minimum lot size, or would they be acceptable on any lot in the R-2 zone, including the 5,000 sq.ft. lots?

Commissioner Turbeville said that there is another issue to consider here. This is reminiscent of the bungalow courts in Los Angeles in the 1920s. The secret to their

success was they were on streetcar lots. If we go forward with this, we need to be sure there is adequate parking, because you're really increasing the density on any given parcel of land.

Mr. Lucas said that parking for these would generally be off the alley. He suggested that we could make a requirement that they be on a parcel that is served by Spokane Transit, to encourage use of public transit. That would probably shrink down the list of eligible parcels considerably. Mr. Lucas offered to do some analysis and bring back a map next month.

Chairman Mount asked referred to the provision in the draft code that allows for cottage housing to be owned and managed as a housing cooperative. Does this mean that the owner would have to reside in the unit? Mr. Lucas said that would be the intent of that provision.

Chairman Mount asked how occupancy would be managed or enforced? He sees this as problematic, once an owner has lived here, graduated, moved on and decides to rent out the unit. Mr. Lucas related his experience with a housing co-op, and said that this type of housing is more common in the Eastern US, where you have shares of ownership. In his experience, living in a co-op in California, there were 108 units and only a certain percentage could be rentals. As soon as that threshold was reached, no additional units could be rented. That was very strictly maintained by the homeowners' association.

Another way to deal with the occupancy could be with deed restrictions. He agreed that it could be difficult to regulate, and we don't really have the manpower to enforce this type of rule. Mr. Lucas offered to do some research and return with examples at the next meeting.

Mr. Schuller commented that this is going to be tough to enforce, and we really don't want to create more problems for ourselves from an administration standpoint. He will be interested to see the research Mr. Lucas comes up with to keep housing of this type from becoming rental 'slum units.'

Discussion continued. Commissioner Conrath asked where in Cheney staff sees this type of development taking place. Mr. Lucas says he really does not expect there to be many developers who choose to consider this option, because you can get a higher density by building traditional apartments. But if someone was interested, we would be providing some guidance in the code for what we want this type of housing to look like.

Discussion Item: #2021-06
Interactive Zoning Map

Mr. Lucas demonstrated the use of a new interactive zoning map now found on the Planning Department page of the City's website.

Election of Officers

Commissioner Early nominated Chairman Mount to continue serving as chairman for the coming year. Seconded by Commissioner Turbeville, and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Conrath nominated Commissioner Hillman to continue serving as vice-chairman for the coming year. Seconded by Commissioner Turbeville, and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Reports:

Commissioner Conrath asked about recent activity at the old Willow Springs restaurant. Mr. Ableman said there have been no permits requested at that location yet. Commissioner Hillman reported that Lenny's Restaurant is being revamped as a 1980s burger joint. Mr. Ableman said that the old Chet's Flowers is being converted to a restaurant. Mr. Lucas said that the old Conoco station at the south end of town is being converted to a coffee stand, but that is progressing slowly.

Staff Reports:

Mr. Ableman reported that the yard waste bins are scheduled to be set out on March 15, and we are planning for a Clean Sweep in April. Details will be announced as they are developed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Approved By:

Susan Beeman, Secretary

Richard Mount, Chairman