

**CITY OF SHOREVIEW
MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
April 8, 2013**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Martin called the workshop meeting of the Shoreview City Council to order at 7:02 p.m. on April 8, 2013.

ROLL CALL

The following attended the meeting:

City Council: Mayor Martin; Councilmembers Johnson, Quigley, Wickstrom, Withhart

Staff: Terry Schwerm, City Manager
Tom Simonson, Assistant City Manager/Community Development Director
Kathleen Nordine, City Planner

Economic
Development
Commission: Josh Wing, Chair

Planning
Commission: Steve Solomonson, Chair

UPDATE ON STATUS OF TEMPORARY MESSAGE CENTER SIGN AMENDMENTS

City Planner Nordine reported that staff has been working on developing appropriate sign code amendments that would provide more flexibility and streamline the process for businesses interested in displaying temporary signs. Amendments being considered would increase the time period a temporary sign can be displayed, larger temporary signs depending on the size of the building. The main issue is how to fairly treat single tenant buildings and multi tenant buildings. In reviewing a recent application for an electronic message center sign at Willow Creek, the Planning Commission requested a moratorium on electronic message center signs until sign code amendments have been adopted. The Planning Commission and the Economic Development Commission (EDC) have discussed this issue.

Message center signs are only allowed in public and quasi-public zoning districts. Proposed amendments would expand their use to the business community with standards for color, brightness and message duration. Deviations would be permitted through the Comprehensive Sign Plan process. A specific size is not stipulated, but the message must be legible to drivers. Roadway width and speed of traffic are the main factors regarding size. Flashing and scrolling signs would not be permitted.

Councilmember Withhart stated that the City has an interest in not allowing message center signs to be so cluttered no one can read them. He asked if there are industry standards. Mr. Schwerm explained that guidelines vary according to location. Mr. Simonson added that typically size of letters will be based on sight lines for specific locations.

Councilmember Wickstrom noted that if the lettering is not big enough, it poses a public safety issue distracting drivers.

Ms. Nordine stated that streamlining the Comprehensive Sign Plan process would allow approval by administrative review for plans with only minor deviations. The Planning Commission does support the proposed changes. The EDC recommends more work related to temporary signage and multi-tenant buildings. A public review process is recommended. Both the Planning Commission and EDC would like to get feedback from the business community. Staff plans to bring a formal text amendment to the Planning Commission by May or June, after which it will come to the City Council.

Mr. Schwerm suggested a special meeting with the Shoreview Mall owner and Mall tenants because of the number of violations that occur on that site.

Councilmember Wickstrom asked who is responsible for violations, the property owner or the tenant. Ms. Nordine stated that both property owners and business tenants are notified of violations. Mr. Schwerm added that it is the building owner who executed the Comprehensive Sign Plan and is ultimately responsible.

Mr. Solomonson stated that the reason for a moratorium is that the Willow Creek neighborhood is very concerned about the proximity of such signs to residential areas.

Mayor Martin asked if there are any other circumstances where business electronic message signs would be as close to residential areas as Willow Creek. Ms. Nordine answered, no, but public schools are also allowed to have electronic message center signs.

Councilmember Wickstrom suggested regulating hours of operation. Ms. Nordine responded that landlords do not support regulation of hours of operation.

Councilmember Withhart stated that there should be restrictions on hours of operation within a certain number of feet from residential areas.

Mayor Martin added that she would support additional restrictions when electronic message center signs are closer than 100 feet to residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Solomonson stated that the Planning Commission would also suggest that message center signs be turned off at night. Hours of operation for message center signs can be addressed on a case-by-case basis or through the Code. There are many factors to consider, which is the reason for the moratorium.

Councilmember Quigley questioned a one-year moratorium when the City is trying to focus on small business development. Mr. Schwerm agreed that for an applicant to have to wait a year would be onerous. The moratorium could be for a shorter period of time. Ms. Nordine suggested a moratorium for three months.

Councilmember Wickstrom stated that boundaries need to be identified on how much should be regulated. Perhaps it is over-complicating the issue to try to think of every scenario. The one thing that will concern nearby residents will be brightness. The Willow Creek application is unique because of the proximity to residents. Churches will also need to be considered, as they are located in neighborhoods.

It was the consensus of the Council to impose a four month moratorium on message center signs as of May 1, 2013, with a directive to staff to expedite the amendment process. The moratorium will be lifted as soon as the code amendments are completed.

REVIEW OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY 2013-2014 WORK PLAN

Mr. Simonson referred the Council to the Annual Report of the EDA, which was adopted at the EDA meeting earlier that evening. One addition will be made, which is to include payback information from projects that have received City assistance through tax increment financing (TIF).

The EDA has endorsed the drafted work plan with some modifications. The two main categories in the work plan relate to Housing and Business with the main objectives of: 1) maintaining quality neighborhoods; 2) preserving housing stock conditions; 3) providing a variety of housing choices; 4) retaining business and promoting expansion; and 5) supporting redevelopment of older commercial areas. The EDA objectives align with the Council goals of maintaining financial stability for the City and improving the environment for business expansion and redevelopment. Specific components of the EDA Work Plan were summarized.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Foreclosures/Vacant Properties: All foreclosed properties are being tracked. This number is beginning to drop. A statistical review will be done to see if, when foreclosures are sold, whether they become rental units or continue as owner occupied dwellings.

Highway Corridor Transition Areas: A comprehensive planning study along the transition areas of Highways 96 and 49 is planned. Appropriate land use changes need to be identified for redevelopment. These areas may become designated Policy Development Areas. Specific areas to be studied will be identified and reported to the Council.

Hoarding/Garbage House Policy: In the last few years, there has been an increase in the number of these properties. This issue demands an enormous amount of time from staff, the Fire Department and other agencies. There has been some success in addressing the issue with assessment and abatement agreements on compliance instead of going to court.

Home Energy Loan Program: The EDA has taken action to recommend to the City Council that eligibility requirements for this program be expanded. In addition to energy-related items, exterior siding, painting, retaining walls and other outdoor items to improve the appearance of the neighborhood could qualify. The EDA will be working with the Housing Resource Center (HRC) to market this expanded program.

Housing Improvement Areas: A workshop was held last year for communities in common (CIC) homeowners associations to discuss how they could benefit from Housing Improvement Area legislation. The legislation allows cities the authority to create Housing Improvement Areas for maintenance work that needs to be done and assess costs back to the homeowner associations. There was only a modest interest shown at the workshop. The legislation is scheduled to sunset in June 2013, but there is an effort for the law to be renewed. If that happens, one of the goals of the EDA would be to re-engage with homeowners associations to see if there is any interest in creating Housing Improvement Areas.

Lakeview Terrace: This project is on hold until final execution on the part of the developer of all development documents. Information is needed by Ramsey County to establish the value of the project that is locked into the TIF agreements to generate revenue. Even though the City received a favorable bid on the public road improvement portion of the project, the bid cannot be awarded until the documents are executed. Agreements are also needed from the railroad.

Rental Property Strategies: The EDA has endorsed implementation of a late fee for rental license application renewals. A bi-annual license renewal process is being discussed.

Scattered Site Blighted Properties: These are properties with major code enforcement issues that may be detrimental to the community. The EDA is reviewing them to assess the need for City action to protect surrounding neighborhoods. The EDA will develop guidelines with timelines to use as a process in dealing with nuisance properties. The goal is to not allow a property to deteriorate over many years before action is taken.

Business and Development

Children's Hospital Property: The EDA would like staff to find out if the property owner has an interest in selling and how the City can assist that effort. Children's Hospital sold a portion of the property to a school, which then chose another location. The City's concern is that the property be developed in accordance with the established PUD.

Nardini Fire Equipment Expansion: Due to the economy, this expansion has not taken place. The City continues to be supportive of assisting an expansion. However, until the company is ready, this project will be taken off the EDA work plan and sent to the EDC to monitor any progress.

Rice Street/694 Interchange: The retail center on the northwest side of this interchange is a potential redevelopment that the EDA would like to support, perhaps in concert with the interchange upgrades.

Shoreview Corporate Center: This is the old Deluxe campus between County Road F and Gramsie Road. The buildings on County Road F are doing well, housing Land O'Lakes and Hill Rom. The buildings on Gramsie have had leasing issues, especially the building across from the Hampton Inn, which is the largest building and sits vacant. Staff will work with the owner group to see if the right user can be attracted or if a redevelopment can be pursued due to the age and condition of the facility.

Shoreview Town Center/Shoreview Village Mall: The EDA and EDC will review the Town Center plan to update newer Board members. Board members will also consider how the market has changed since the plan was developed and how the expansion of PaR Nuclear has impacted it. The Mall owner will be contacted again about his interest in selling for redevelopment.

Westinghouse-PaR Nuclear: The City is ready to assist in exploring short- and long-term options for expansion by this key company. Staff is communicating regularly with PaR Nuclear and awaiting their go ahead for the project.

Mayor Martin commended the EDA on the Work Plan and what has been accomplished in the last two years. There was consensus by the City Council to endorse the EDA work plan as outlined.

Mr. Simonson stated that the EDC is discussing making the business exchanges more informal, holding one or two workshops for small businesses and incubators, and development of a small business website.

OTHER ISSUES

Public Safety Committee: Councilmember Wickstrom stated that members of the Public Safety Committee have expressed concern about not having enough to do. Mr. Schwerm responded that the Committee meets bi-monthly, and a discussion of this issue is scheduled.

Councilmember Johnson suggested an educational role for the Committee. The Council discussed the Committee working on such issues as car break-ins, self-defense, Neighborhood Watch, mailbox safety, develop a tie-in with Night to Unite and other ways to help residents with crime prevention.

Mayor Martin requested a more aggressive schedule for the Council to meet with all committees and commissions.

Highway 96/Highway 10: Mr. Schwerm noted that the intersection of Highway 96 and Highway 10 will be closed until November while the entire intersection is reconstructed. Traffic signals will be at Hamline and County Road F. Traffic will also be pushed to the westbound access at Lexington.

Cable Commission: Mr. Schwerm reported that the City's informal renewal process expires in October. An extension of the informal process was requested, but Comcast would not agree.

The rift is between public television and public access. Comcast does not have to offer public access, as it is not included in the fee. The Council may be pressured to fund public access.

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.