

November 5, 2014

The Scandia Planning Commission held their regular monthly meeting on the above date. Chair Christine Maefsky called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following were in attendance: Commissioners Travis Loeffler, Dan Squyres and Chair Christine Maefsky. Staff present: City Administrator Kristina Handt, City Planner Sherri Buss and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund. City Council member Chris Ness was also in attendance. Commissioner Steve Philippi arrived at 7:15 p.m. Commissioner Jan Hogle arrived at 8:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, MINUTES

Squyres, seconded by Loeffler, moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried unanimously by those present.

Loeffler, seconded by Squyres, moved to approve the October 7, 2014 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously by those present.

PUBLIC HEARING: ORDINANCE NO. 157, AMENDING THE SCANDIA DEVELOPMENT CODE, CHAPTER 2, SECTION 3.0 REGARDING DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

Planner Buss described the proposed changes to the Development Code as directed by the Planning Commission at the October meeting for the purpose of encouraging preservation of historic buildings and structures. Language would be added in Chapter 2, Section 3.1(3) (F) to permit historic buildings and structures to exceed the maximum height permitted in zoning districts. The Accessory Structures section would be modified to provide exceptions to ordinance requirements by allowing historic buildings to exceed the height standard and permits an exception to the number and/or total square footage of accessory structures allowed on a parcel. Buss explained the criteria and procedures for granting exceptions that will be added in Section 3.2(5) and (6).

Due to a recent question on defining the setbacks of accessory structures on corner lots, Buss proposed a clarification in the Accessory Structures Section 3.2(2)(B) with added language to read: “No detached accessory structure shall be located closer to the road right-of-way in relation to the front lot line than the principal building on a lot ...”. This clarifies that detached structures on corner parcels may not be located closer to roadway along the front lot line, but may be closer to the road right-of-way on the side lot line of the parcel.

Buss also presented the recommended changes to the accessory structure table describing lot sizes that was also included as part of the ordinance amendment. Chair Maefsky suggested the lot sizes be described as “1 acre to less than 3 acres”; “3 acres to less than 5 acres”, etc. The Planning Commissioners were in consensus to modify the table using Maefsky’s suggested language.

Chair Maefsky opened the public hearing at 7:12 p.m.

Joe Vruno provided photos of a corner lot at Odell Avenue and 209th Street and described how the house faces Odell Avenue and he considers the side lot line as 209th Street. He would like to construct a garage on the flatter spot behind the home approximately 35 feet from 209th Street.

Susan Rodsjo, 21450 Pomroy Avenue, spoke in favor of the ordinance amendments, not only for the purpose of relocating the Hilltop Barn on their property, but for the importance of preserving historical structures and buildings throughout Scandia.

There were no further comments and the hearing was closed at 7:16 p.m.

Commissioner Squyres asked if a referral process could be allowed for if the Zoning Administrator questioned approval or denial of an exception. Buss explained that it can always be an option to bring this question to the Planning Commission or City Council whenever it is not clear if the application meets the criteria.

Commissioner Loeffler asked about the costs. Administrator Handt explained that an Administrative Permit is processed at \$50, versus much higher costs for a variance. The exception process eliminates the need to go through a variance and there may be cases where a situation does not meet variance criteria.

Maefsky questioned the criteria that states “appearance and arrangement of buildings should reflect design elements identified in Scandia’s Architectural Design Guidelines”, as the guidelines are intended to refer to commercial buildings. Buss stated that it can be used for guidance and examples to help interpret the historical nature of rural buildings. Maefsky suggested the language be changed to make it clear that it would not be strictly enforced to require types of materials that take away the historical elements of existing buildings. Buss offered that the language in 3.2(5)(B) could be changed to read “The appearance and arrangement of buildings should be consistent with the design elements of historic buildings and structures identified in Scandia’s Architectural Design Guidelines”.

Maefsky asked why a denial could allow for an appeal to be made to the City Council. Handt explained that this follows the appeals process described in Chapter 1 of the development code. Buss stated that the Council could refer the application to the Planning Commissioners if desired.

Buss suggested that the Administrator could bring the first few requests for exceptions to the Commission to let them see how the ordinance is working.

Maefsky noted that the Comp Plan encourages options to promote the preservation of historical structures and the ordinance is in line with this.

Buss summarized the ordinance with the suggested revisions to clarify a front lot line on a corner lot, lot sizes will be described using “less than”, and changing language in 3.2(5)(B) regarding use of the city’s Architectural Guidelines.

Maefsky, seconded by Loeffler, moved to recommend to the City Council that Ordinance No. 157 be approved as amended. Philippi stated that he would abstain from voting since he came in late to the discussion on the ordinance. The motion carried 3-0.

The recommendation to approve the ordinance will go before the Council at their November 18th meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING: ORDINANCE NO. 158, AMENDING THE SCANDIA DEVELOPMENT CODE, CHAPTER 1, REGARDING ADMINISTRATION

Planner Buss presented a new section to Chapter 1 of the Development Code to permit administrative exceptions for lots that are close to, but do not exactly meet the ordinance requirements for some approvals for uses such as kennels, livestock and accessory structures. As recommended by the Commission, exceptions could be permitted on parcels that deviate from the minimum lot requirement by 5%. Exceptions would not be granted from subdivision regulations.

The procedure requires an application with the Zoning Administrator for an exemption. Criteria contained in Section 15.2 must be met, such as not creating an unreasonable burden on adjacent properties.

Chair Maefsky opened the public hearing at 7:38 p.m.

Joe Vruno asked what the density in the agricultural zone is. Buss explained that it is 4 buildable lots per 40 acres, with lots between 2 and 5 acres or 20 acres or greater.

There were no further comments and the hearing was closed.

Loeffler asked for clarification that a property at 4.99 acres would not be classified as a 5 acre lot on property records with the County. Buss replied that no changes to property records would be made, but just for allowed uses on the property.

Squyers, seconded by Loeffler, moved to recommend to the City Council approval of Ordinance No. 158 as presented. The motion carried 4-0.

The recommendation to approve the ordinance will go before the Council at their November 18th meeting.

2015 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Administrator Handt presented the Capital Improvement Plan for 2015-2019. The CIP was prepared with input from the department heads and Council review during their budget work sessions. Handt noted the project highlights for the Community Center, Fire, Public Works and Parks departments.

Chair Maefsky opened the public hearing at 7:51 p.m.

Janie O'Connor, 14682 Oakhill Lane, addressed the Commissioners with a request to support funding for Lilleskogen Park in 2015. She stated that \$36,000 is allocated in the CIP for site improvements in 2015 which is to come from grants and donations. If this funding does not come through, the project will continue to be delayed. O'Connor provided a figure of \$22,500

for construction of the parking lot. Installation of the parking lot and curb and gutter are critical components for continuation of the park accoutrements such as a gazebo, boardwalk and educational signage. O'Connor stated that she had been told that park fees of \$6,000 could be collected in 2015 and requested that the City provide the additional funds towards the Lilleskogen Park improvements so that the project can continue to move forward.

Susan Rodsjo, 21450 Pomroy Avenue, questioned the need for the proposed second fire station. She asked that if the grade for fire protection rating is as high as it can be with the current facility, then funding for a second station could alternatively be put into community improvements such as parks, trails, roads or the ice rink.

Administrator Handt explained that locating a second fire station on the western edge of Scandia would help the insurance rates for those residents in that vicinity and also help with recruitment of firefighters within an 8-minute response time to that station. Increased calls to the Big Marine Park Reserve are also anticipated as the park expansion proceeds. Commissioner Loeffler stated that the proposed structure would be for equipment only and not staffed with office space. Loeffler gave examples of two buildings lost to fire between Scandia and Forest Lake in which the contents could have been saved had the response time been shorter.

Commissioner Squyres stated that although fire coverage is important, there is limited funding for maintenance of two stations. Scandia is a rural community that may not be able to support this – perhaps the station could be delayed and funds swapped into parks funding.

Chair Maefsky temporarily closed the hearing and provided a summary of the Log House Landing Improvement Committee which she and Commissioner Philippi have been appointed to. Two meetings have been held and they are working through a course of action to look at improvements to the site that are in line with the Comprehensive Plan. Philippi added that good thoughts have been brought to the table which would lower the costs and impacts to meet the environmental goals of protecting the river. They will be evaluating these through the next few meetings and he is looking forward to the Committee making a final recommendation.

Chair Maefsky reopened the hearing on the Capital Improvement Program for public comment.

Pam Plowman-Smith, 20919 Quint Avenue, a member of the Log House Landing Committee, reported that the potential is there in which a lower cost project could allow for the balance of the DNR's \$200,000 grant funds to be used for towards funding improvements to Quinnell Avenue as an access to the river.

Council member Chris Ness, 18440 Norell Avenue, addressed Ms. Rodsjo's concern and noted that the CIP can be considered a wish list of potential projects. The second fire station has a 2

priority rating and wouldn't be approved for construction until the time is right. He added that there appears to be a consensus on the Council for a smaller Log House Landing project and he is looking forward to receiving the Committee's recommendation.

There were no further comments and the hearing was closed at 8:16 p.m.

Chair Maefsky stated that a Capital Improvement Committee had been meeting to set priorities using citizen input up until it was disbanded in 2011 and she is disappointed that a committee process is no longer used to plan capital projects. Philippi agreed that the committee was beneficial especially for the purpose of planning street improvements.

Handt explained that the CIP is put together with staff input from department heads and the Park and Rec Committee, was reviewed by the Planning Commission in May, and went through variations during Council budget sessions before being presented at the public hearing. It was her understanding that the CIP Committee was not being effective.

Ms. Smith stated that there appears to be a renewed interest from the public in providing input to the City's capital projects.

Council member Ness requested that discussion of a CIP Committee be added to the next Council Work Session agenda.

Commissioner Loeffler recommended that adequate funds be dedicated to park projects because well maintained parks draw people to Scandia. Handt explained that it's too late to levy additional funds for 2015. If funding is intended to go to a specific project, then cuts to other line items in the general fund would need to be done.

Loeffler, seconded by Squyres, moved to recommend to the City Council that the Capital Improvement Plan be amended for the Lilleskogen Park Improvement Project so that \$22,000 of the designated \$36,000 cost in 2015 is sourced from the General Fund budget and the remaining \$14,000 from grants and donations. The motion carried 5-0.

Philippi suggested that the paving and curb/gutter installation for Lilleskogen be reconsidered to a more environmentally sensitive means. Handt said that paving is necessary to prevent sediment runoff into the County's storm water system and the cost for pervious pavers was unrealistic.

The Commissioners entered into a lengthy discussion about the Log House Landing Improvement Project and the timing of the Committee's final recommendation to the Council. It may not be until January that a final recommendation is ready. Chair Maefsky was concerned that approving the CIP with this project could be construed as approving the project without knowing its compliance with the city's Comprehensive Plan. Planner Buss stated that they are approving a budgetary expenditure and not necessarily the final project design. They could recommend that a final design be consistent with the Comp Plan and presented to the Commission.

Maefsky, seconded by Philippi, moved to recommended to the City Council approval of the 2015-2019 Capital Improvement Plan contingent upon the acknowledgement that the Log House Landing Improvement Project is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and that it be reviewed for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan by the Planning Commission before moving forward. The motion carried 5-0.

RODSJO VARIANCE AT 21450 POMROY AVENUE, CONTINUED FROM OCTOBER 7, 2014 (RESOLUTION NO. 11-05-14-01)

The Planning Commission tabled this item at its October meeting to allow the Commission to hold a public hearing on changes to the development code that would permit historic structures such as the Hilltop Water Barn to exceed the height standards in the development code.

Since the Commission recommended this ordinance change earlier in the meeting, a variance for height will not be needed if the Council adopts the ordinance change. Planner Buss explained that the Commission could approve a variance to locate the structure closer to the roadway than the primary structure which would go before the Council on November 18. A resolution was prepared with findings and conditions.

Squyres, seconded by Hogle, moved to approve Resolution No. 11-05-14-01, Approving a Variance at 21450 Pomroy Avenue. The motion carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Loeffler, seconded by Squyres, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk