

February 3, 2015

The Scandia Planning Commission held their regular monthly meeting on the above date. Walt Anderson was welcomed as the newly appointed Commissioner. Chair Christine Maefsky called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. The following were in attendance: Commissioners Walt Anderson, Jan Hogle, Travis Loeffler and Chair Christine Maefsky. Staff present: City Administrator Kristina Handt and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund. Commissioner Dan Squyres arrived at 8:15 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA, MINUTES

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

Hogle, seconded by Loeffler, moved to approve the January 6, 2015 and the January 16, 2015 minutes as presented. The motion carried unanimously by those present.

DRAFT ORDINANCE NO. 159 ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS

At its January meeting, the Planning Commission continued the discussion of options to encourage more affordable housing and lifecycle housing in Scandia. Accessory apartments and dwellings were focused on.

Planner Buss provided draft ordinance options for discussion of changes to the development code pertaining to accessory dwellings. Administrator Handt led a review of the planner's report.

A revised definition for accessory apartments was provided, based on common usage in most other communities. Accessory "apartment" can be updated to the term accessory "dwelling unit". The definition was modified to include a secondary dwelling unit on the same lot as well as a secondary dwelling unit within the principal structure. The definition was also corrected to include units that are part of a commercial use, as was discussed at the last meeting.

The amendment to the ordinance would permit Accessory Dwelling Units with an Administrative Permit in all districts, and remove the current requirements for a Conditional Use Permit in the VMU A, VMU B and Industrial Park Districts. When part of a commercial use, the ownership of the accessory unit must be in common ownership to the business.

Section 5 of the performance standards was added to provide for a detailed process for issuing an Occupancy Permit for rental of an accessory dwelling unit that is not occupied by family members. Chair Maefsky noted that if non-family and non-employee use of an accessory dwelling for the purpose of making money for the property owner is now being considered, one must be careful of the implications this may cause, such as to density.

Handt stated that the EDA's perspective of increasing housing opportunities is not for money but to provide affordable housing options in Scandia so that workers in local businesses do not have to commute such long distances.

Commissioner Anderson questioned the septic capacity when additional people are living on a property. There could be negative effects over the long-term. Handt agreed that this is a concern and advised that language be added that detached structures have separate septic systems. Anderson clarified that they shouldn't be creating an undue hardship for increasing capacity for an existing system, but it should be looked at or monitored in some way; perhaps the County could review usage annually or within some time frame. Handt thought this could be administratively burdensome or could slip through the cracks. The best way is to have the property owner meet the requirements upfront. Using language from the temporary dwelling unit ordinance, it could state that the unit be connected to a County approved on-site waste disposal system.

Option 2 provided by Planner Buss outlined more development standards for accessory dwelling units within single-family homes and for units that could be detached from the home or built above garages. These standards were derived from various codes from other communities.

A maximum of one bedroom in the accessory dwelling unit would be allowed. The draft ordinance requires that the Administrative Permit be recorded as a restrictive covenant that would run with the property until released for that accessory unit. Release of the covenant would be defined as removal of the unit from the property, or be converted back to a storage garage. Handt described the covenant as similar to a development agreement with a developer, which is enforceable if violations occur.

Maefsky questioned the potential setback issues, such as within wetland or shoreland, in which allowing a secondary dwelling unit could have. Handt explained that a proposed location would have to meet all setbacks, including wetland and shoreland, prior to being allowed. Other entities such as the Conservation District and Watersheds are involved now for applications that are within shoreland and wetland boundaries and reviews are performed.

Standard 6 of Option 2 addressed units that are internal to the principal structure. They must be limited to 800 square feet and any stairways leading to the unit must be enclosed.

Standard 7 addressed detached accessory units. They could be permitted in the VN, AG Core, Ag Preserves and GR districts on parcels that are a minimum of one acre. The floor area could not exceed 1,000 square feet and the unit must be located in the rear of the property. The distance between the detached unit and the principal structure must be a minimum of 20 feet, which Handt questioned because the building code standard allows for 10 feet of separation.

Commissioner Loeffler questioned the standards in #7 when an existing barn or garage could be used as the accessory dwelling unit. The height and design standards as listed may not be met, such that the exterior trim, finish, roof pitch, etc. must match the principal building. It was suggested that language exempting existing accessory structures be added so that barns and garages could be converted to accessory dwelling units.

Maefsky stated that she is pleased that the Commission is looking at this since “aging in place” is becoming more commonplace and stated that discussion will continue next month. The issue of separate structures and its effects on density should also be a topic of discussion. She asked that the current code on accessory apartments be provided along with the proposed amendments for clarity on the changes.

Buss’s staff report also addressed the question raised at the January meeting of simplifying minor subdivisions. To meet state statute, a public hearing must be held – an Administrative Permit could not be issued by the City. Therefore, only an optional review by the Planning Commission could be eliminated. This could shave two weeks off the process and slightly reduce costs related to the Planner’s time to prepare a staff report. Consensus of the Commission was to make no changes to the process.

DEVELOPABLE AREA IN THE VILLAGE AREAS

Administrator Handt provided two maps of the Village Area showing properties that have the potential for development of at least three houses. The maps showed that there are few parcels in the core area of Scandia left to be developed. Handt explained that the EDA has proposed that denser zoning districts be expanded out beyond the core to support affordable housing opportunities. The EDA has focused on the 45-acre Sodergren lot that is for sale adjacent to the firehall on the north side of Highway 97.

Handt explained that developers see the CUP process for building multi-family developments as a hurdle, and may go to other cities where the density is more known and definitive. Handt stated that making multi-family dwellings a permitted use may be the incentive needed to have developers interested in Scandia. Design standards could be stricter if there are concerns on appearance. Commissioner Anderson agreed that CUPs are expensive and public hearings can be controversial.

Chair Maefsky noted that they have the primary responsibility to the residents of the City and the City as a whole. Scandia is an appealing place and the reason people move here. The CUP process gives them the ability to make sure development adheres to the Comp Plan.

Handt recommended that the development standards of the ordinance be revisited – in the VMU A and B Districts – and look at what changing to a permitted use looks like. A compromise or changes could potentially be made here. Land use areas around the Village Area will continue to be looked at.

LOG HOUSE LANDING IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FOLLOW UP

Chair Maefsky provided a summary of actions which happened after the January 16 Special Planning Commission meeting on the Log House Landing Improvement Project. The City Council approved the recommended plan with a change that the parking lane be paved. Maefsky explained that the County gravel consultant offered alternative paving options such as bound gravel that is more resistant to erosion, but the Committee felt that they ran out of time to further explore this option. A meeting with 5 of the 9 Committee members last week continued to

explore this option with the consultant, but concluded that the material will not work due to the amount of precipitation recorded in eastern Minnesota.

Maefsky went on to explain that Pam Plowman-Smith has researched other alternative paving surfaces that resemble dirt roads, and Maefsky plans to present these options to the City Council at their February 4 work session. Smith will also address the Council on behalf of the Friends of the Log House Landing with nine areas in which alternative designs for the roadway could be considered for improved aesthetics, such as eliminating curb and gutter from the upper roadway, reducing the parking lane to 8-1/2 feet, make the curb design rustic looking with the use of a color coat over the concrete curb, adding a picnic table and benches near the historic sign and maintaining the gentle opening of 205th Street onto Quinnell Avenue.

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR 2015

Hogle, seconded by Loeffler, moved to nominate Christine Maefsky as Planning Commission Chair for 2015. The motion carried 5-0.

Squyres, seconded by Loeffler, moved to nominate Jan Hogle as Planning Commission Vice Chair for 2015. The motion carried 5-0.

These recommendations will be considered by the City Council at their February 17 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk