

I. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Planning Commission was held on Monday, October 10, 2022, commencing at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Chairperson Asmus called the meeting to order.

A. ROLL CALL:

Chairperson	Shannon Asmus	Present
Commissioner	Michael Flaata	Present
Commissioner	Larry Dahl	Present
Commissioner	Eric Mathwig	Present
Commissioner	Jeff Woods	Present
Commissioner	Tom Zens	Present
City Planner	Hannah Rybak	Present

B. ANNOUNCEMENT OF ADDITIONAL ITEMS

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Commissioner Mathwig, seconded by Commissioner Zens, to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2022, meeting. All members present voted aye.

Motion Carried.

III. SCHEDULED ITEMS

A. NONE:

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. ALLEY VACATION REQUEST – BETWEEN 606 N SIBLEY & 618 N SIBLEY

Planner Rybak provided an overview of the request. The owners of 606 and 608 North Sibley Avenue have filed a joint petition to vacate the east/west alley that runs between their properties. They are the only abutting landowners to the subject portion of the alley. The land, if vacated, would serve the existing business functions. No development is proposed.

Commissioner Zens asked if there are any other blocks in that area where there are east/west alleys, as he does not see any. It would seem odd that this block would have one and others don't. Planner Rybak responded that there were likely more east/west alleys in the original plat, but they have since been vacated.

Commissioner Woods stated that he thinks there is one near SJP Designs.

Planner Rybak stated that this is the original Town of Litchfield plat, so it is well over one hundred years old. She requested that the Planning Commissioners consider this alley specifically; is this alley needed here for any reason?

Commissioner Asmus asked if the City has maintained this alley? Planner Rybak responded that she is unsure of to what extent the City provides maintenance. Commissioner Woods stated that Dale and Dwight have had the responsibility for this alley.

Commissioner Asmus stated that the Commission appears to have no concerns with the City vacating this alley.

B. ZONING ORDINANCE UPDATES

Shipping Containers/Pods

Planner Rybak stated that there currently are not any regulations specific to shipping containers or pods. She explained that staff's interpretation has been that a shipping container may not be used as an accessory building, as they are technically exterior storage as well. There have been requests to utilize them as buildings, generally for the purpose of storage.

Additionally, the use of moving pods/containers for moving, temporary storage during a construction project and in the event of a natural disaster or water damage, seems to be an appropriate use.

The Planning Commission agreed with staff's stance and are supportive of placing specific regulations into the Ordinance, to assist in enforcement.

Decks

Planner Rybak requested that the Planning Commission consider what an appropriate setback is for a deck in the front yard, specifically for properties where the front yard setback is 20 feet (R-2). Encroachment for a deck is fairly standard, however the 20-foot front yard setback already permits structures fairly close to the street. She also noted that the "prevailing setbacks" provision permits reduced setbacks in an area where structures have already been constructed at a reduced setback.

The Planning Commission discussed and determined that the setback for a deck in the front yard should not be reduced for properties with a principal structure setback of 20 feet. If the prevailing setbacks provision applies, people may utilize that, or come to the Planning Commission and City Council with a variance request.

Draft Code Sections

Drafts of the Landscaping, Buffers and Screening, and Exterior Storage in Commercial/Industrial Districts were presented to the Planning Commission following the guidance provided at the September Planning Commission meeting. The Commission reviewed them and approved as written.

V. OLD BUSINESS

VI. ADDITIONAL ITEMS

Commissioner Asmus asked about the status of the junk pile located at the former Bates Building. Planner Rybak explained that the new owner took possession of the property in August. There was a miscommunication regarding who was responsible for cleaning up the property. Staff has now coordinated with the new owner and expects the property to be cleaned up shortly.

Commissioner Asmus noted that there are many temporary signs in town that are supposed to move from time to time to comply with the Ordinance but are not moving. They are essentially acting as permanent signs.

Commissioner Woods asked if anyone knows who purchased the Nistler house; its looking shabby. Planner Rybak responded that she has sent several code enforcement letters and the new owner complied with the requirements of the letters.

Planner Rybak informed the Commission that the posting for the Planning Commission vacancy is live and applications will be accepted through the end of this month. Planning Commissioners should encourage any potential candidates they know to apply.

VII. SET HEARING DATES AND TIMES

The next scheduled meeting is Monday, November 14, 2022, at 5:30 p.m.

VIII. REVIEW OF COUNCIL ACTIONS

A. REQUEST FOR SITE PLAN REVIEW GRANTED – 212-216 E NELSON STREET

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Asmus adjourned the meeting at approximately _____ p.m.

Hannah Rybak
City Planner