

To: Planning Commission Members  
Honorable Mayor and City Council Members  
From: Shawn Wetterlin, Building/ Zoning Official  
Date: February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
Re: Meeting Minutes for Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015

The Planning Commission met at 5:15 p.m., on Tuesday February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015, in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The following members were present Dave Hanifl, Don Smith, Linda Larson, Patty Dockendorff, Ex-officio member Brian Krenz. Jerry Steffes, Richard Wieser and Mani Edpuganti were not present. Shawn Wetterlin was also in attendance.

1. The Minutes of the January 7<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission were approved as written by consensus of the members present.
2. Reviewed City Code of Conduct. The Chair reviewed the code of conduct (which was distributed in advance as part of the meeting materials) clarifying potential 'conflict of interest' when voting. Disclosure is foremost, followed by common sense, and governed by any financial interest.
3. Reviewed City Rules and Bylaws. The Chair reviewed the Rules and Bylaws (which was distributed in advance as part of the meeting materials) under which the committee operates.
4. Chairman gave an update on the Comprehensive Plan indicating that the Council authorized the City to enter into a contract with MSA. A work group will be formed to discuss time lines and committee structure and meet with MSA on Thursday. A Special Planning Commission meeting will be held February 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss these items and ensure consensus on a timeline, committee structure, kick off planning and determine where each of the planning commission members would like to be involved.
5. Dynamic signs discussion. Don Smith and Patty Dockendorf will work on a draft for the next regular meeting. The direction will be permitting small on premise signs in the Commercial District(s) which conform to generally accepted practice for: nighttime intensity; dwell; and prohibition of full motion video and animation. After speaking with the Council, City staff, planning commission members and some in the community this appears to be the general consensus. A public hearing will be required. Until such time as new regulation is adopted it is the opinion of the Planning Commission that while the language is not as clear as it could be dynamic signing is currently prohibited.
6. Discussion continued on potential Rental Registration/ Inspection programs. Motion by Patti Dockendorf and seconded by Dave Hanifl. All members voted in favor of adoption of the attached document to be sent to the City Council for their acceptance.
7. The commission reviewed Hotel Study results and were briefed on the next steps by the City.

8. Notice of special joint City Council/ Planning Commission meeting on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 5:30 p.m. to discuss, Senior Housing, Annexations, Stoney Point and other topics of mutual interest.

9. Other items:

Dave Hanifl inquired if the possible vacating of Twilite Street in exchange for the former Fogel property would be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and if it was a fair exchange? He noted that the Fogel property was substantially below elevation and potentially not fillable. He asked if there should not first be a proper 'delineation' and determination of value prior to determining comparative values? No action is currently pending before the Planning Commission.

10. Meeting adjourned at 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted, Shawn Wetterlin

Attachment as per item number six:

Motion on Minimum Housing Standards and/or Rental Registration and Inspection Program.

BY MOTION THE FOLLOWING REPORT WAS ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO BE REPORTED TO

THE COUNCIL FOR THEIR CONCURRENCE OR RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION.

The Planning Commission, led by member Dockendorff, reviewed several community Rental Registration and Inspection programs. Patti also conferred with the Minnesota League of Cities and reported to the Commission.

Findings:

1. A community can have a rental registration program without having an inspection program.
2. A community can have a set of minimum housing standards applied to all housing not just rental housing.
3. A rental inspection can occur at any interval including at registration and annually to every five years.
4. Registration fees can be relatively modest with larger fees reserved for those who do not voluntarily and promptly register.
5. Reasons for a program.
  - a. A factor in urban decay is an increase in non-owner occupied single family dwellings.
  - b. A factor in urban decay is a dwelling or yard that is in a progressive state of disrepair or a yard that is unkempt with weeds, items that are 'stored', parked or left in disarray in yards.
  - c. A factor in urban decay is disrepair of dwellings progressing from one home to several in a neighborhood.
  - d. A factor in urban decay is code violations in rental dwelling that lower rents, reduce property values and attract renters of a more transient nature.
  - e. Unlawful activity is a factor in decaying neighborhoods which exacerbates additional decay.
  - f. Once urban blight begins it is more difficult to control.
  - g. Stricter enforcement in one municipality can affect the demand for low rent properties in

another municipality.

6. Reasons not to have a program.

a. Cost of administration.

b. Excessive fees can lead to landlord dissatisfaction.

c. Additional regulation where there is not a demonstrated need.

7. There have been examples of badly deteriorating single family rental homes in the community.

8. The City received a HUD grant and invested \$340,000 in single family owner occupied homes.

Rental properties were not eligible.

9. Consistent and vigilant enforcement of the ordinances of the City of La Crescent is an essential factor in maintaining the nature of the community.

CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATION. That neither minimum housing standard ordinance nor a rental registration and/or inspection program need to be undertaken immediately; but that the building official be encouraged to be attentive and take progressive action to maintain our neighborhoods and community in a high state of maintenance and repair in accordance with standards as expressed in City Ordinances. A program will be considered in the future if properties begin to demonstrate 'distress'. The building official is asked to report rental property trends