
Planning Commission Members:
Sean Finley, Mark Spitzack, Myron Volker, Bob Burns & Jim Mulcahey

MINUTES OF THE CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
CITY OF JANESVILLE, WASECA COUNTY, MINNESOTA

March 6, 2024

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Administrator Rogers at 3:00 pm.

Members Present: Mark Spitzack, Jim Mulcahey, Bob Burns, Myron Volker, and Sean Finley

Staff present: City Administrator Clinton Rogers and Community Development and Business Relations Coordinator Randy Thompson.

Randy Thompson introduced himself to the Planning Commission and Commission members introduced themselves.

2. NAME CHAIRPERSON FOR THE YEAR

Motion by Mulcahey, second by Burn to name Myron Volker as Chairperson. Motion carried 5-0.

3. PUBLIC HEARING – VARIANCE REQUEST FOR 535 OAKWOOD DRIVE

The public hearing was opened at 3:01 pm. Rogers stated that Randy Palm, 535 Oakwood Drive, is requesting a variance to construct a garage in the rear yard setbacks of his property. The reason for the request is that his back yard has a large slope and he won't be able to build his garage there and asks to encroach into the rear yard setback. Rogers reviewed the staff report, which covered variance requirements in State Statute. Palm stated that the shed will be 16 feet by 28 feet and will be used for storage. He spoke with several neighbors and they do not have any concerns about the location. Rogers stated that the notice for the hearing was sent to neighboring properties within 350 feet and that he nor staff has heard any feedback from those properties. He also noted that no one was present at this hearing. He asked that the Commission make a motion recommending the City Council approve the variance request. Motion by Mulcahey, second by Finley to recommend City Council approval. Motion carried 5-0. The public hearing closed at 3:05 pm.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Finley, second by Spitzack to approve the agenda. Motion passed 5-0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

1. 2021-2023 YTD Building Permit Report

Rogers stated that the City Council and Economic Development Authority receive this report at the beginning of each year. He noted that there were 4 fewer permits in 2023 compared to 2022.

Mulcahey stated that the reason for fewer new home permits is because of the lack of available lots in town and we hope that improves within the 12 to 24 months. We are looking for more buildable lots. When asked how many permits we have this year, Thompson stated that there are 3 new permits so far this year. Rogers stated it would be nice to see the Borneke lots completed and get some permits there. The area just south of the Borneke has he believes 2 empty lots remaining along West Street.

Burns asked about the next 24 months and where we are at with the housing study results. Mulcahey stated that we completed housing workshops with the State. Mulcahey asked what the workshop found as our next needs. Rogers stated that the workshops identified improvements at the Southtown Mobile Home Park and also the need for rental properties including multi-family rental units.

Burns asked what areas of town have infrastructure available for new lots. Discussion took place on recent developments and Rogers identified the areas where new developments could take place. He also showed some recent developments and discussions he is having with another property owner for a development. All of these areas are available to connect to utilities.

Burns asked how long it would take to get potential properties ready to build on. Rogers said Borneke's area should be pretty soon since he continues to work on the infrastructure. Rogers stated that the public hearing process, Planning Commission review, and City Council action could possibly take about 40-50 days.

Burns asked when developer begins to plan a project, are public bids advertised for work, or is that private? Rogers stated that, if it's on private property such as Borneke, there are no public bid requirements. But plans need to be approved by the city Engineer.

Burns mentioned the area just east of Dollar General and asked if there has been any discussion. Rogers stated there has not been and that it is not in City limits. Burns said that he had owned that property previously and there were some discussion on annexation, but it was never completed. There was a concept plan and discussions with Engineers on plans for that. We would have to update those plans, but there was a start at least and there is potential there. Finley asked about the area just south of Sexton's along East Elysian Lake Road. There has not been any discussions on this, but there is some potential there too.

Burns asked about the workshop comments on Southtown. Are the improvements infrastructure related or the aesthetics? The workshop talked about looking for some grant funding to help the residents with their units. Burns asked if there is a demand for that housing. Rogers stated he couldn't recall the wording in the study and will review this again. The workshop identified that area as an affordable housing initiative. Mulcahey noted several empty spaces and he has heard that it is difficult to fill them.

Mulcahey said it is difficult for smaller towns because there is not enough opportunity with some of the State funded formulas for subsidized housing. There is little incentive in smaller cities since the larger cities see higher subsidies since the property valuations are higher. Thompson agreed. Mulcahey gave examples of rental reimbursement programs and their history of struggles here. Burns asked if the Miller Homes properties were all sold and Finley stated they are about full now. Burns said that Miller Homes stated they enjoyed working here. Real estate sells fast in Janesville.

2. Topics to Review in 2024

Rogers stated that we have a few main topics for the Commission to look at this year. The first is to update the Comprehensive Plan. Rogers explained that this is the legal document that guides the development and growth of the community. He has reviewed the current Plan and has found that we need to report past growth and place future growth areas into it. He said the Minnesota Valley Council of Governments will help us with the updates. The Council updated Elysian's recently and did a good job. Finley asked if the Plan needs to be rewritten completely and Rogers stated that updates to the current format would be ideal. We will also put current demographics into it. Burns asked when Council of Governments facilitates this, are they willing to compare ours to others and provide suggestions from other cities? Yes, that will be part of their assistant. Mulcahey asks for an estimated costs for this and Rogers guessed a few hundred dollars. Burns asked if Region 9 could help, but Rogers doesn't think so. Rogers also pointed out the EDA is completing a survey and we can use material from that survey in the Plan. Volker asked how the approval of the updates would take place. Rogers stated that the City Council will ultimately approve it through public hearings. Burns asked if certain zones are necessary, such as the Industrial Zone. Rogers stated that specific zones aren't required, but if they are part of the Zoning Ordinance, then we need those zones identified.

Rogers said the other big topic includes cannabis. We need to determine several items including licensing procedures, locations of sales, and if we would include the manufacturing of the products. The Legislature has stated that Planning Commissions need to study this and then give guidance to the City Council. We can begin working on this this summer after the current Legislature puts regulations in place. Finley suggested that we wait for this year's Legislature. Mulcahey stated it will be interesting to see what the Legislature does with this. Being a smaller community, we may have our limits and we need to see what the Session brings. Finley asked if there has been any interest from potential business and Rogers stated that there have not been many questions or interest. Rogers stated the City Council

has a moratorium in place on any cannabis related development through 2024. Burns also pointed out that we can be more restrictive than what the law will say, so we will wait to see what develops. Mulcahey also explained that the current law does have some limits on the number of businesses and dispensaries. He speculated that, in smaller communities, we may only be allowed for sales at convenience stores, liquor stores, or tobacco stores. Burns agreed, stating there are many unknowns out there including the limitations on strains and even limitations on truckers. Rogers did state that the County recently approved a tobacco license in Janesville but isn't sure if they have plans on cannabis.

Rogers also stated that the Legislature has discussed giving more zoning authority to the State and taking some of the authority away from cities. This concerns Rogers in that he had concerns about the State dictating our zoning.

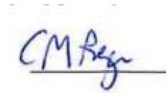
3. Discuss Meeting Schedule for 2024

The Commission discussed meeting dates for 2024. It was the consensus to meet the first Tuesday of the month at 3:00 pm. Rogers stated that we may not need to meet next month because he doesn't see the Legislature placing any cannabis regulations out by then. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, May 7 at 3:00 pm.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Volker, seconded by Finley to adjourn meeting at 3:41 p.m. Motion passed 5-0.

Respectfully signed by:



04/02/24

06/18/24

Clinton Rogers

Date

Approved

City Administrator

City of Janesville