MINUTES OF THE CITY OF OKOBOJI PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MEETING HELD ON MAY 15, 2023

The Planning and Zoning Commission of the City of Okoboji, Iowa met on the above date at 5:30PM at the Okoboji City Hall. Commission members present were Barbara Mendenhall, Han Grant, Perry Pearson, and Dorris Welle. Commissioner John McMahon joined the meeting at 5:35PM. Others present were Jeff Rose, Matt Thelen, Dan McGuire, Kate Ebinger, and City Administrator Michael Meyers.

NEW BUSINESS

Motion made by Commissioner Welle and a second by Commissioner Mendenhall to approve the meeting minutes from the March 22, 2023 Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. The following Commissioners voted "YEA": Mendenhall, Grant, Pearson, Welle. Motion passed 4-0.

Chairperson Pearson opened a public hearing to discuss and make recommendation on a lakeshore landscaping permit application submitted on behalf of 5001 Lake Shore Drive, Okoboji, Iowa.

City Administrator Meyers advised that the project was very straightforward. Meyers felt that the project was very small but that it required a lakeshore landscaping permit due to the replacement of the preexisting timber wall. Meyers advised there were not comments in favor, opposition, or neutral to the proposed project.

Matt Thelen, who is the landscaper associated with the project, detailed the project and answered questions from the Board members.

Motion made by Commissioner Grant and a second by Commissioner Mendenhall to recommend the lakeshore landscaping application for approval. The following Commissioners voted "YEA": Mendenhall, Grant, Pearson, Welle. Motion passed 4-0.

Chairperson Pearson opened a public hearing to discuss and make recommendation on a lakeshore landscaping permit application submitted on behalf of 1603 Lake Shore Drive, Okoboji, Iowa.

City Administrator Meyers advised that this project had a previously existing lakeshore landscaping permit. Meyers advised that the project was considered final by the City and that the permit was closed out. Meyers noted that there was a portion of the project which was never completed. The property since changed hands and the new property owner wished to finish the project. Because it was a new property owner and the previous permit was considered closed, a new permit was to be issued. Meyers noted that this was in no way different than the original proposal and that it was a very small portion of the wall that needed to be replaced. Meyers again noted that a lakeshore landscaping permit was needed due to the excavation into the lakeshore to replace the wall.

Motion made by Commissioner Mendenhall and a second by Commissioner Welle to recommend the lakeshore landscaping application for approval. The following Commissioners voted "YEA": Mendenhall, Grant, Pearson, Welle, McMahon. Motion passed 5-0.
Commissioner Pearson discussed issues of lakeshore landscaping. City Administrator Meyers advised that he felt both of these applications that were recommended for approval were really worthy of the formal lakeshore landscaping application process. Meyers felt that these were extremely simple and that the time it takes to get through the City's process was significant. Meyers also advised on the cost associated with this and how it affects property owners, specifically the cost of engineering.

Commissioner Mendenhall commented on the fact that small things can turn into big things and that it was her preference that it come before the Commission. Commissioner Grant agreed. Commissioner Welle inquired if there could be a way to speed up the process. Meyers advised that the Commission only meets once a month and that creates a challenge. Commissioner Mendenhall felt that the Commission could meet with more frequency to allow for better efficiency. Commissioner McMahon felt that City Staff should have more discretion on whether or not certain aspects, such as engineering, are required based on the expertise of the City's engineer. Commissioner Mendenhall encouraged that the Commission consider more meetings to help move projects through the system quicker. Commissioner Welle agreed that the City did not want to open a loop hole and felt they needed to advocate for the residents and neighbors.

Matt Thelen detailed the steps and costs of his project and advised that there are more engineering fees in the retaining wall than it would be in labor and material.

Commissioners felt that there could be some flexibility in the requirement for engineering but wanted to still have some Commissioner overview. Meyers advised that he understood and that the City can approach this differently moving forward and work to find a more efficient path for these types of applications.

Commissioner Pearson discussed safety fencing on the lakeshore. Meyers advised that he recently had a property owner who wished to install a 'safety fence' on the lakeshore. Meyers reminded the Commission of a previous request for this where the Planning and Zoning Commission advised the applicant to seek a variance from the Board of Adjustment. The Board of Adjustment denied the request for a safety fence but felt the Planning and Zoning Commission might consider amending the ordinance to allow for something like this to exist. Meyers provided different examples of safety fencing or fall protection systems.

Commissioner Mendenhall advised that they have a steep lakeshore that has vegetation across the top of the bank. Mendenhall advised she did not understand why this was necessary. Commissioner Pearson expressed concern about the visual of a fence along the lakeshore. Meyers advised that he told the property owner that he would discuss again with the Commissioner. Meyers commented on the difference between a straight up and down fence and a fall protection system extending horizontally out of the lakeshore. Mendenhall commented on how fence posts and a fence can destabilize the lake bank. Matt Thelen commented on the snow load and other issues that could happen. Jeff Rose agreed with Thelen's concerns. The Commission was not interested in continuing pursing this topic and no further action was taken.

City Administrator Meyers discussed and took no action on various issues including looking at the sign ordinance, lakeshore landscaping database, Sherwood Forest, and potential Sanborn Avenue trial project.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 6:33PM.