

MINUTES OF THE OKOBOJI CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON JUNE 28, 2024

Mary VanderWoude called the meeting to order at 8:30AM on June 28, 2024. Councilmembers Andres, Delperdang, Mendenhall and Sanders were presented. Councilmember Hentges was excused. Others present were City Administrator Michael Meyers, Police Chief Jason Peterson, City Attorney David Stein, Dan G'Sell, Matt Thelen, John Hight, Darrin Kruse, Doris Welle, Mat Hanson, Mark Kramer, Barbara Mendenhall, Kae Hoppe, Sara Shomshor, Nancy Everist, Terry Lutz, Hank Grant, Andrea Troiano, Aaron Jones, Denise Norland, and Kelly Norland.

NEW BUSINESS

City Administrator Meyers updated the Council on the revisions to the lakeshore landscaping ordinance. The primary goal is to address inefficiencies in emergency situations to streamline the process and quickly mitigate hazardous conditions.

Meyers, in consultation with John Hight from Beck Engineering, recommended specific amendments to the ordinance. These amendments aim to provide temporary emergency provisions for homeowners in catastrophic situations while maintaining the existing ordinance for non-emergency cases.

Proposed changes include allowing contractors to work beyond one construction season, eliminating the requirement for an abstractor's certificate of neighboring properties, not notifying neighboring properties, and omitting the need for a public hearing.

Meyers questioned the extent of the Planning and Zoning Commission's involvement in the emergency process, noting their good work over the past six to seven years.

City Attorney David Stein explained the process for amending the ordinance and the potential for further resident involvement or appeal processes.

Councilmember Andres sought input from Planning and Zoning Commission members present. Barbara Mendenhall emphasized the need for the Commission's oversight of applications.

Aaron Jones inquired about the possibility of emailing Commission members for comments and votes, but Meyers and Stein advised this would violate the Open Meetings Act.

B. Mendenhall and Councilmember W. Mendenhall supported notifying neighbors about permits while streamlining the process.

Dorris Welle suggested a courtesy review by the Commission members without taking formal action, allowing administrative approval by City Staff.

Councilmember Sanders expressed concern about abandoning the entire lakeshore landscaping process, advocating for stabilization followed by the formal application process.

Discussion highlighted the complexity of these projects and the reliance on engineers and landscapers for optimal plans.

Councilmember Andres proposed City Staff handle applications, with the Planning and Zoning Commission providing feedback individually.

Matt Thelen of Oleson Landscaping discussed stabilization challenges.

The idea of publicizing projects on the City's website was discussed, with Andres discussing a weekly meeting with the Planning and Zoning Commission or advising that the City should simply trust City Staff for timely and accurate action.

Meyers reiterated that the City can amend the ordinance as needed.

Mat Hanson from Blue Water Prairie Landscape and Andrea Triano from Geostabilization International discussed challenges and potential solutions for lakeshore stabilization.

Councilmember Delperdang supported City Staff making decisions on applications, with plans emailed to the Planning and Zoning Commission prior to decisions.

The Council directed City Staff to work on official revisions and necessary processes for future action.

Terry Lutz highlighted the need for collaboration with the Iowa Great Lakes Sanitary District on moving the sanitary sewer line from lakeshores to streets. Councilmembers Andres and Delperdang volunteered to work with the District on these discussions.

Discussion on debris removal from the lakes and the importance of online reporting forms for damages to help the County attain federal disaster status.

Kelly and Denise Norland repeated their major concerns about sediment and stormwater runoff from the park project being constructed nearby. City Administrator Meyers advised on meeting with the project owners to potentially construction a water retention pond on the southern end of the property to help with sediment as well as velocity of water coming off of the site. Councilmember Andres felt the City Attorney should immediately write a letter to the project owners demanding action be taken. The Council directed City Administrator Meyers to discuss with City Attorney Stein on this letter and to move it forward.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM.

Mary VanderWoude, Mayor

Michael Meyers, City Administrator