CITY OF CAMERON
MINUTES
September 28, 2020

SPECIAL WORK SESSION

Dennis M. Clark	P	
Darlene Breckenridge	P	
Becky Curtis	P	(via Zoom)
Julie Ausmus	P	
Roy Estes	P	

The City Council of the City of Cameron, Missouri met in Special Session on Monday, the 28th day of September 2020, at 6:00 p.m. at the Cameron Community Building, 915 Ashland Drive. Mayor Dennis M. Clark led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

Mayor Dennis M. Clark presided with the following Councilmembers present: Darlene Breckenridge, Becky Curtis (present via Zoom videoconference), Julie Ausmus and Roy Estes. Absent: None.

Present were City Manager Stephen Rasmussen, Utility Director Johnson, Finance Director Carmen Weigand, Animal Control Officer Kathy Turner, Code Enforcement Officer Rae Flinn, Human Resource Manager McVicker, Community Developer Wymes and City Clerk Shellie J. Blades.

BUILDING INSPECTIONS / INSPECTOR POSITION

City Manager Rasmussen gave a PowerPoint presentation that explained required building inspections, detailed the need for a new inspector position, provided information on nuisance abatement and discussed the creation of a Board of Appeals.

Councilmember Estes inquired about the time required to complete inspections on thirty or so building permits per year. Developer Wymes explained each project may have many inspections to be done at different stages of construction.

Councilmember Ausmus asked if a new inspector would have all their training requirements in advance. Developer Wymes stated they would already have their required certifications. Also asked what a third party inspector would be used for. Developer Wymes replied possibly for commercial inspections. City Manager Rasmussen added that at any given time you never know how many inspections may be needed.

Councilmember Ausmus inquired about sending plans out to third parties for review and approval and asked why we would do this to ‘catch up?’ Why wouldn’t we send them all out and have those all done by a third party? Developer Wymes stated they would like to send large projects such as subdivisions to a third party and keep the smaller project in house. City Manager

Rasmussen inquired how long it takes to review plans. Developer Wymes replied usually three to four weeks and added that commercial plans must be signed off on by an engineer. City Manager Rasmussen added that thirty days is too long and unnecessarily delays projects; turn-around times of two weeks or less are desirable. Councilmember Ausmus inquired if this timeframe includes approval by the Planning and Zoning Commission for site plans. Councilmember Estes asked if utilizing a third party would speed up the process and decrease red tape. City Manager Rasmussen responded a third party would quicken the process and free up staff's time.

Councilmember Curtis inquired what would existing staff be doing if a part-time person is hired and plans are sent to an external reviewer. Developer Wymes stated there would still be inspections and plan reviews to be done, just not all. Councilmember Curtis inquired if the new inspector would also have fire certifications. Developer Wymes responded yes, since our Fire Department is volunteer and doesn't provide this service the new position would also be doing those types of inspections.

6:28 p.m. – Councilmember Breckenridge excused herself and left the meeting.

Mayor Clark stated he felt we are addressing issues as a result of growing pains of the City and recommended reviewing the inspections currently being done and possibly getting rid of unnecessary inspections.

Councilmember Estes asked if hiring a new inspector would make us able to complete the required inspections that the City is currently not doing. Community Developer Wymes responded in the affirmative.

Councilmember Ausmus stated she felt like contracting out plan reviews and commercial inspections is a must.

Councilmember Estes directed a question to the gallery and asked if the building permit fee increased by 15% would having a timely inspection be worth that. Sue Manion asked how much would plan review services cost and what would be the cost of hiring a part-time person….how part-time would that person be? Councilmember Ausmus also inquired what the services of a plan reviewer would cost. Developer Wymes stated that those costs would be paid by the developer. City Manager Rasmussen responded that staff would look into it and get back to Council. Councilmember Ausmus inquired what existing staff will be doing if we contract out these services. Developer Wymes responded there are still inspections and small-scale site plans.

Councilmember Estes inquired about the business/commercial inspections that should be getting done annually and aren't. Mayor Clark asked about the City's liability especially with the situation with buildings on Third Street. City Manager Rasmussen responded that we are not doing things as well as we could and we need to do better.

Mr. Riley in the gallery inquired about how many inspections get done per building permit. Developer Wymes stated up to thirteen or fifteen. Mr. Riley began to explain how he only gets four inspections when working in Clay County when City Manager Rasmussen reminded him this is a Council work session and there is no public participation at this time. Mr. Rasmussen stated he would contact Mr. Riley to discuss issues at another time.

Councilmember Curtis inquired about other cities that contract out this type of service and what type of insurance do they have or provide their cities. Councilmember Estes asked how the City's fees compare to other municipalities.

Councilmember Ausmus inquired when business licenses are due. City Clerk Blades explained the process and that all business licenses expire May 31st each year. Councilmember Ausmus stated there are a large amount of inspections to be done in a very short amount of time. Developer Wymes stated we can still issue the license and then follow up and make sure an inspection gets done within the year. Councilmember Curtis inquired if the inspection process can start well ahead of time. City Clerk Blades explained that if there are deficiencies found at a business that has had their license renewed, the City does have the authority to suspend/revoke a license until the conditions are remedied.

NUISANCE VIOLATIONS / BOARD OF APPEALS

City Manager Rasmussen advised Council that Staff needs direction on enforcement for nuisance violations and a definition of their interpretation of egregious versus minor violations.

Developer Wymes stated that many of the dangerous structures the City ends up demolishing started down that path through years of neglect. Many of the buildings on Third Street have not been maintained and ultimately it comes down to responsibility and accountability. Codes equate to public safety which further equates to quality of life. In order for the City of Cameron to become a destination city, we have to enforce our codes.

Developer Wymes explained that a Board of Appeals for code violations is indicated in the Property Maintenance Code which was adopted just over a year ago. This Board would help arbitrate between Code Staff and the public. The City's Board of Adjustment currently performs very similar functions on other types of matters and have agreed to also serve as the Board of Appeals for Codes. The Board of Adjustment is a five-member board who meet as needed (there is currently one vacancy on the Board caused by the passing of Mr. Richard Whalen). City Manager Rasmussen stated it is a good idea to have a third party overseeing the process and not City staff.

Mayor Clark stated he has strong feelings about code enforcement and believes it creates more issues than anything. He thinks that Council has not communicated to staff enough on this subject and would like to see the City focus more on severe cases. He would also prefer that code enforcement be complaint driven. Councilmember Ausmus stated she has seen violations at the same house for eight years but instead of addressing that, someone is getting a ticket for parking on grass.

Councilmember Estes inquired how City enforces the codes now. Developer Wymes replied it is complaint driven and also staff initiated. Developer Wymes stated he disagrees with complaint driven code enforcement and believes it does not work.

Mayor Clark stated he wants staff to be successful. Part of the reason the waterline failed years ago was due to a negative opinion of the City by the public due to code enforcement. He

wants code enforcement to be top down (worst first) and complaint driven. He has never heard any criticism from the public on the buildings that the City demolishes.

Councilmember Curtis asked if Mayor Clark is directing staff to disregard our Ordinances and turn a blind eye to situations. Mayor Clark responded that this occurs everyday from teachers to police officers, picking and choosing what needs to be enforced.

Fire Chief and Planning & Zoning Chair Mike O'Donnell informed Council that many of the codes that have been adopted came as recommendations from the P&Z and they are not strict by any means. He agrees that they need to be updated occasionally to keep up with changes. Mr. O'Donnell disagrees with complaint driven enforcement because it makes the public feel targeted. The codes we have are good; the problems come from how they are administered. Mr. O'Donnell stated he backs what City Staff are trying to do by enforcing the codes. If the Board of Adjustment does double-duty as the Board of Appeals, it will not matter who the person is that is asking for oversite. The Board will make a decision based on the facts, not on who the person is. There is a lot of miscommunications in the public about code enforcement. Many people complain about getting a ticket when what they've really received is a letter explaining the problem and giving the person a timeframe to remedy the problem.

Councilmember Estes inquired how many violations are sent out in a year. Developer Wymes did not have that figure on hand but would get back to him. Developer Wymes added that Code Enforcement's goal is compliance, not punishment.

Chief O'Donnell relayed that if you drive through town, there is a lot of junk everywhere. The City has recently been discussing large trash pickup. This issue is a variable of code enforcement; people don't know what to do with their large trash. Councilmember Ausmus added that people want convenience.

Councilmember Estes stated he supports the formation of the Board of Appeals by utilizing the Board of Adjustment.

City Manager Rasmussen stated that tonight was for discussion and to get a feel for how the Council wants to proceed. Staff will continue to review and discuss and will await further guidance.

At 7:39 p.m., Councilmember Ausmus made a motion to adjourn the work session. Councilmember Estes seconded the motion. Meeting was adjourned with a vote of four in favor, zero opposed. (Councilmember Breckenridge absent).

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Mayor Dennis M. Clark

ATTEST:

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City Clerk