

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES CITY OF GRANT

September 19, 2017

Present: John Rog, James Drost, Matt Fritze, Jeff Schafer, Jeff Geifer and Robert Tufty

Absent: Jerry Helander

Staff Present: City Planner, Jennifer Swanson; City Clerk, Kim Points

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **OATH OF OFFICE, MATT FRITZE**

The Oath of Office was taken by Council appointee Matt Fritze.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Item 6A, Comprehensive Plan Update was moved to Item 7B.

MOTION by Commissioner Schafer to approve the agenda as amended. Commissioner Tufty seconded the motion. MOTION carried unanimously.

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES, July 18, 2017**

MOTION by Commissioner Drost to approve the July 18, 2017 Minutes, as presented. Commissioner Tufty seconded the motion. MOTION carried unanimously with Commissioner Fritze abstaining.

6. **OLD BUSINESS**

A. Application for Text Amendment to allow Community Solar Gardens in A1 and A2 Zoning Districts. – City Planner Swanson advised at the meeting in July the Planning Commission considered the request of US Solar to amend the City's Zoning Ordinance to add Community Solar Gardens to the list of conditionally permitted uses in the A-1 and A-2 zoning districts. A duly noticed public hearing was held and closed, and the Planning Commission discussed the request. Generally, the Planning Commission was open to considering an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance but wanted more details spelled out in the proposed ordinance change to ensure that the

proposed use could be compatible with existing neighborhoods and the city's adopted Comprehensive Plan. Generally, the Planning Commission requested that the Applicant and staff work together to refine the draft ordinance to address/include the following:

- Include performance standards for Community Solar Gardens that would include limitations for:
- Lot Size/Area
- Access requirements
- Size of installations
- Include residential solar energy systems concurrently with the consideration of the request for community solar gardens.
- Include screening requirements
- Address removal/abandonment

After the July Planning Commission, Staff worked with the Applicant to develop a draft ordinance that would address the issues as identified during the meeting. The draft ordinance is attached to this staff report for your review and consideration. Staff would note that the Applicant has not provided any comment on the latest draft of the ordinance prepared and included within this packet prior to the staff report going out.

The applicant then distributed revisions of the draft to the Planning Commission.

City Planner Swanson reviewed the draft ordinance noting the performance standards and proposed changes from the applicant.

Staff is requesting the Planning Commission provide a recommendation to the City Council for consideration at their regular October meeting.

The Planning Commission reviewed the requested changes from the applicant to the language included on page 3 relating to performance standards #1, "shall be located on a parcel that is located on" The Planning Commission agreed with the change. Another requested change from the applicant related to performance #2 relating to the site and primary frontage.

City Planner Swanson clarified the proposed language noting it related to the only access to the site shall be from a state or county road especially during construction. The Planning Commission determined the language would not be revised per the applicants request.

The applicant requested a third language change relating to performance standard #e relating to screening. The applicant indicated his only requested change was “from adjacent residential structures and public rights-of-way”. The Planning Commission agreed with the requested change.

Chair Rog asked the applicant who benefits from this type of project.

The applicant came forward and provided the background again of community solar farms noting the power goes directly into the power grid. The benefit comes to subscribers in bill credits. US Solar works mostly with cities and schools. The City’s actual electric bill could be reduced 5-10%.

Chair Rog stated he does not believe community solar farms match the City’s Comprehensive Plan. It does not benefit Grant at all and the City really doesn’t understand the impact of this type of project. He stated he does not think they are appropriate for the City of Grant.

Ms. Joyce Welander (no address provided) stated the proposed location is at Manning and County Road 12 on a 64-acre parcel. She provided the background of her farm and noted the Comprehensive Plan calls for open space. She asked if the City would rather see houses there, provided them with a Grant history book and thanked them for considering the proposal asking for approval.

City Planner Swanson referred to Section C, Submission at time of initial application noting that all of those requirements are in addition to the requirements for a CUP. She advised all ordinances can be readdressed and or revised through the amendment process. Any changes do require a public hearing and ordinances are amended quite often.

MOTION by Commissioner Schaffer to recommend approval of the draft ordinance as amended. Commission Giefer seconded the motion. MOTION carried 5-1 with Chair Rog voting nay.

This item will appear on the October 3, 2017 City Council Meeting agenda.

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan Update – At the Planning Commission meeting in July staff provided a brief introduction of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan Update (2040 Plan) process that we will be working on over the next year. As presented in July, the City is required to update its Comprehensive Plan every 10 years per state statute for consistency with regional plans and systems as provided by the Metropolitan Council. To comply with this requirement, the Metropolitan Council prepared a 2015 System Statement that identifies which regional systems impact the City, and how the City

must plan for and address these systems with the 2040 Plan. For reference and information, the 2015 System Statement is attached to this memo.

The first step in the process is to understand what, if anything has changed in the community since the last plan was adopted in 2008. To assist with that analysis, staff is preparing a Background Report that will provide updated demographics, housing, economic and land use trends since 2008. Preliminary and draft information will be presented to the Planning Commission for discussion at the September 19th meeting, which will include:

- Current and projected population trends
- Current and projected household trends
- Existing household types
 - Affordability trends
 - Permits
 - Ownership rates
- Current and projected employment trends
- Regional trends for land uses, population and households
- Adopted 2030 Land Use Plan and current Acreages
- Natural Resources, including wetlands, lakes and streams

In addition to the background information, we will kick-off goal setting with discussion of a SWOT exercise (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) at the meeting.

City Planner Swanson stated at the next meeting work will be done on the goal statements and vision statements/.

8. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Commissioner Schafer to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. Commissioner Tufty seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Points

City Clerk

APPROVED