

WHITE CLOUD PLANNING COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
White Cloud City Office, 12 N. Charles, White Cloud MI 49349
July 26, 2022
6:00 p.m.

A. Call to Order

Chairperson Shears called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. Roll Call (confirmation of a quorum)

Present: Anthony Johnson, Chad Fetterley, Lori Shears, Christine Tiernan, and Jamie Steffes.

Others Present: April Storms (city manager), and John Wallace (Zoning Administrator)

Absent:

C. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson Shears gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance

D. Set/Amend Agenda

Steffes made a motion to set the agenda as presented, supported by Johnson.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion passed unanimously

E. Public Comment (Comments limited to 2 minutes)

Dan Abid indicated that he thought the city should have more duplex zoning.

F. Approval of Minutes

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of June 28, 2022

Motion made by Tiernan to approve the regular meeting minutes of June 28, 2022, supported by Steffes.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion passed unanimously.

G. New Business

1. None

There was no new business.

H. Unfinished Business

1. Update on International Property Maintenance Code.

Wallace explained that the city has had two ordinances covering blight in the city which was the International Property Maintenance Code which was adopted in 1992 and the Blight Ordinance (Ordinance Number 2014-21) which became effective in 2014. Having two ordinances created consistent in the enforcement of the ordinances. To correct this Wallace is recommending the city update to the 2015 Property Maintenance Code which is also consisted with the state building code and to rescind the Blight Ordinance. Wallace obtained a copy of the 2015 International Property Maintenance Code and edited it in a few areas to reflect specific conditions in the City of White Cloud and has included in your packet. Wallace indicated that he is recommending that the Planning Commission recommend to the City Council that this new property maintenance code be adopted.

Storms reviewed the approval process of the property maintenance code for Planning Commission. She also indicated that the adoption of the new property maintenance code and rescinding of the blight ordinance would also eliminate a conflict in the fee schedules for the two ordinances. She also explained that the ordinance would require that the city create a construction board of appeals which would also serve as the appeal board for the property maintenance code.

Johnson questioned whether Subsection F of the proposed code concerning historic buildings contradicted itself in that that the code states that the code shall not be mandatory for historic buildings where such buildings are judged by the code official to be safe and in the public interest of health, safety, and welfare.

Wallace explained that it is possible to deem the building safe even though it may not meet the current code and that such historic buildings were probably inspected under a prior code. The code official could review for a more base level of safety making sure the plumbing and electrical systems were functioning properly.

It also was stated the City of White Cloud does not currently have any state designated historic buildings.

Chairperson Shears requested a motion if there was no additional discussion.

A motion was made by Johnson, supported by Steffes to recommend that the proposed new property maintenance code proceed to the City Council, supported by Steffes.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion approved unanimously.

2. Construction Board of Appeals.

Storms explained that a Construction Board of Appeals must be created to hear appeals of decisions made in regard to the enforcement of the new property maintenance code. She explained that it would be a 3-member board, created by the City Council, which would meet on an as-needed basis.

Wallace explained that the Construction Board of Appeals would also be serving as the appeal board for any appeals made relative to the building code.

This item was referred to the Planning Commission as information only.

3. Redevelopment Ready Communities Marketing Plan Draft

Shears indicated that she was very impressed in the plan draft.

Storms indicated that she wanted to submit to the Redevelopment Ready Communities staff this month. She indicated that she is trying to get at least one thing off the RRC Trello board each month. This item was referred to the Planning Commission as information only.

4. Rental Inspection Program Update

Wallace indicated that he is preparing a draft for a rental inspection program and that Storms has been working on the operational forms. Wallace indicated that a draft should be ready for Planning Commission review at one of the next two meetings.

Wallace indicated that people who are renting their homes or apartments would have to register for the program and that rental units would be inspected every three years. There is also provision for people who live in housing units in the program to register complaints. Wallace believes that with such a high percentage of rental housing units in the city this program is needed to protect the quality of the housing stock.

Johnson inquired if the purpose of the program is to make sure that landlords do their due diligence. Wallace explained that whoever owns the housing unit at the time of the inspection would be responsible to make sure the unit meets the Rental Inspection Code standards. For a housing unit which has been inspected and there is a subsequent sale, the new owner would not have to have the unit reinspected until the three-year inspection cycle due date came up.

Johnson indicated that if the city needed the names of people who do housing inspections that he could provide such information. Storms indicated that she would need referrals to people in this business.

Johnson indicated that there has been a stigma with White Cloud rental housing that the city has not been able to attract tenants who respect the property and that this new program should help with that.

Tiernan indicated that the city had some time ago tried to start a rental inspection program and had met with a lot of opposition.

Wallace indicated that landlords have to decide whether staying in the rental business is sustainable for them. There is no successful pathway either for the landlords or the city if the quality of housing stock is not protected.

Storms indicated that she has two cases where rental units have been reported to be unlivable and the tenants are still paying their rent. The landlords are not fulfilling their obligation.

Johnson indicated that people getting into the housing rental business have to understand all of the costs involved including current and future maintenance and taxes. He believes some landlords do not understand all the variables and are just buying a cheap piece of property, doing nothing to it, and renting it out and that is not how it needs to work.

Tiernan indicated that getting landlords to comply and getting rid of the bad rental stock reputation will be challenging.

Wallace said there are landlords who do not have the capacity to maintain their rental and perhaps they should be sold.

Shears said it is the landlord's responsibility to do their reference checks and see who they are renting to.

Steffes said he knows a lot of landlords that are happy to rent to DHS clients and not do much work on the housing unit and still have guaranteed money.

Storms indicated we are where we are at today because we haven't done anything and sometimes you have to go in another direction. She also indicated that the city is not doing this to make money but only to cover costs.

I. Public Comment (For items discussed on this agenda/3 minutes)

Dan Abid made additional comments on the rental inspection program and the need for additional education.

J. Correspondence

1. Zoning Report – July 26, 2022

Shears asked if the Court Street house that is boarded up is all good, and that there are no longer people camping out in there.

Storms responded that it is locked up and has been cleaned up. She explained the remaining steps to be taken by the county in the disposal of the property.

K. Adjournment

Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:32 p.m., supported by Steffes.

Ayes: 5

Nays: 0

Motion was approved unanimously.



John Wallace, Zoning Admin/Recorder

9-27-22
Date



Lori Shears, Chairperson

9/27/22
Date