

City of Long Prairie
7:00 P.M., Monday, September 20th, 2021
City Council Meeting Held Via-Teleconference

The Long Prairie City Council met by phone at City Hall, 7:00 pm, on Monday September 20th, 2021. Mayor Dixon called the meeting to order with the following present by phone or at City Hall: Council members, David Wright, Lilah Gripne, Bob Klick, Dattrick Mitchell and City Administrator/Clerk Ted Gray. There were 63 other city staff and community members present at the meeting.

Mayor Dixon addressed the room in regard to the previous week's events.

Council member Wright motioned Klick seconded to approve the consent agenda:

- (a) Approve Agenda for September 20th, 2021, with the additions, 2. Review and Approve Temporary Liquor License for Christie House Event, 3. Review and Approve IQ Magazine Advertisement.**
- (b) Approve minutes for September 7th, 2021**
- (c) Approve August – September Bills**

Motion carried unanimously

(Appointments)

Daiv Freeman addressed the City Council in regard to his property located at 334 Central Ave. Mr. Freeman questioned why this property was in violation. Administrator Gray read from Chapter 16 of the city code book that referenced the ordinance in violation. The ordinance reads that residential units of two or less provided the units do not change the original use of the property or building. After reading this Administrator Gray stated a variance request would be required if the apartment would stay. Mr. Freeman asked why the apartment was in violation? The violation was that the apartment removed the commercial space. Mr. Freeman disagreed with this and referenced back the ordinance stating he did not change the use of the building but removed commercial space. Mr. Freeman claims that his property was already commercial residential since he currently has one apartment upstairs and a commercial space on the ground floor. It was noted by council member Gripne that the city does not have a zone labeled commercial residential. After comments made by council member Gripne, Mr. Freeman questioned that the use of the building was commercial residential and that did not change. Mr. Freeman stated that he would hope that Gripne would resign tonight and would be replaced. Mr. Freeman continued to reference other buildings that have downstairs apartments, such as the Reichert Building and 410 Central Ave. Council member Gripne stated that those properties had existed prior to the most recent update in the building code. There continued to be discussion regarding the need for Mr. Freeman to apply for a variance. Mr. Freeman disagrees stating that he is in compliance with the ordinance because he has two or less apartments and still has a commercial space and therefore no variance would be required. There was reference to a letter that Mr. Freeman received from the City Attorney regarding the violation of this issue. Council member Wright asked how Mr. Freeman could have been blindsided by this letter? He Also questioned a claim that Mr. Freeman had made on the radio regarding already being denied for a variance. Mr. Freeman stated he did not say that he was denied a variance, but that another property owner, Jerry Verrier was denied a variance for a similar request. Mr. Freeman referred to the council meeting held on March 15th, 2021, stating he addressed the council with questions

regarding this property and invited anyone to come walk through it with him. Mr. Freeman stated that no one from the council had stopped to review the property. Also, that there was no reference in the minutes to the need for a variance. Council member Wright stated that a variance would be required, Council member Wright admitted that interpretation of the ordinance was ambiguous, but the city has understood that the interpretation of the ordinance is that you cannot eliminate a commercial space for the creation of an apartment. Council member Wright accused Mr. Freeman that he was holding the community hostage with the closure of Hats of Coffee even though it had no relation to this issue. Mr. Freeman responded that he had closed it due to stress created by the city pressuring him with legal notices to comply with the city ordinance. Mr. Freeman asked the council to make the decision to allow this apartment to remain as is. Administrator Gray advised that that decision could not be made at this time. City Attorney Joe Kreuger was referenced to explain the council could decide on this issue, but Mr. Kreuger also explained the proper procedures and options to correctly changed the ordinance and comprehensive plan to allow for apartments such as this to exist. At this time the city has not pursued any legal action against this property to correct the ordinance violation. The council discussed with Mr. Freeman a type of mediation to discuss this topic further. It was agreed upon to meet on Monday September 27th at noon at the Senior Center to mediate this issue. Mayor Dixon, Council Member Mitchell, and Administrator Gray would be intendance at this meeting.

Council member Dixon motioned Klick seconded to approve the mediation meeting for Monday September 27th, 2021, at noon at the Senior Center with Mr. Freeman in regard to 334 Central Ave. Motion carried unanimously.

Dave Ruda addressed the council on the continued issue with headlights shinning into his property when vehicles exit 2nd Ave Apartments. Mr. Ruda stated it has been over a year and half and the issue has not been resolved. Also, the developer never contacted him throughout the process to discuss options to correct this issue. Through discussion the council directed Administrator Gray to contact the developer and request that he contact Mr. Ruda by October 4th, 2021.

Council member Wright motioned Dixon seconded to approve the directive to have Administrator Gray contact the developer of the 2nd Ave Apartments to discuss with Dave Ruda a resolution to correct the shielding of lights issue. Motion carried unanimously.

On the agenda the council was supposed to listen to a presentation from Brian Simpson on the creation of a neighborhood watch. Mr. Simpson unfortunately could not attend the meeting due to an illness, but there was discussion on the creation of a neighborhood watch. Members of the audience expressed concerns and made comments regarding community safety. Administrator Gray presented a how to guide to start a neighborhood watch and would add the information to the website. Chief Breiter also commented that any community involvement helps in preventing crime and if any member of the community sees something suspicious or has questions to please contact the police department. It was mentioned that all leaders of the community should be involved in this discussion and the next steps for the creation of neighborhood watch would be for members of the community to set up a meeting for more discussion.

Pennie Dubin was scheduled on the agenda to discuss concerns and issues with Chapter 12 of the City Code regarding Animals. Pennie had reached out to City Administrator Gray and asked to recognize at one of the October council meetings.

Pat Schultz, Brad Thelen, Dan Classman, Steve Laumeier, and others were present to address the council regarding concerns that residents have about the proposed road project for Riverside Drive. Questions were raised regarding the reasoning for the project: How the project was to be paid for, why are the assessment costs high in comparison to other properties, and how the storm water would be controlled. The council and Administrator Gray responded to the question of why the project was needed. There is an opportunity in pairing with Todd County to replace the city infrastructure, water, sewer, curb, and gutter when the road is replaced. Todd County has a large financial investment for the road which spreads out the costs. Mr. Schultz questioned why the road, Riverside Drive, needed to become a 10-ton road instead of a 6-ton road. County Engineer Lauren Fellbaum responded that Riverside Drive is currently a 10-ton road and would be remain a 10-ton road. There were concerns raised about the assessments for parcels in city limits and in the county that would be affected by this road project. Administrator Gray responded that the city is aware of these concerns and is looking into options to address this issue. The assessments are preliminary at this time. City Engineer Kent Louwagie addressed the group in regard to the storm water, erosion concerns, and the placement of curb and gutter. From this discussion Mr. Schultz had asked about the possibility of having a meeting at Riverside Drive to go over these concerns. It was agreed upon to hold a special meeting on Thursday October 7th at 6:00 p.m. to discuss and review the areas of concern on Riverside Drive. The meeting will start in the Long Prairie Livestock parking lot.

(New Business)

Council member Dixon motioned Klick seconded to approve the 2022 Health Insurance Renewal with no increase to City Staff. Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Dixon motioned Klick seconded to approve the temporary liquor licenses for the Christie House Promotion event on October 1st. Motion carried unanimously.

Council member Wright motioned Dixon seconded to approve the advertisement in the IQ magazine for both fall and spring issues in the amount \$495.00 per issue. Motion carried unanimously.

(Council Reports)

Public Works: Council member Mitchell reported that the daily water, wastewater rounds and samples are going fine. In the next few weeks public works will be working on winterizing fire hydrants, mowing, picking up leaves at parks, and sweeping. The crosswalks and parking stall painting is complete for the year.

Police Safety: Council member Wright gave a report on the Police and Fire Departments. The Police Chief led the School Patrol Training. Chief Breiter wanted to thank all the officers for the work during the past two weeks. The Fire Department was able to purchase rescue tools with the funds and donations that were collected during the chicken and corn feed. They will be holding a demonstration on the use of these tools on Monday September 27th at 7:00 p.m.

EDA: Council member Wright reported that the EDA meet with Monica Segura with the Latino Economic Development Authority on work that she is doing in our community with local business owners and is looking to set up an office in Long Prairie. The EDA group also listened to a presentation from AJ Peters in regard to business creation at the Hart Mall. Mr. Peters is currently looking at grant opportunities.

Liquor Store: Council member Klick reported that he attended a meeting put on by the West Central Food and Beverage Association to go over topics that are affecting liquor stores and bars in our area. Klick reported that there is current legislation being discussed that could eliminate local municipal liquor stores. There will be more information to come on this issue.

Health: Council member Gripne reported that at the last wellness network meeting there was discussion on the increasing COVID numbers in the community. Currently Todd County's vaccination rate is at 46%.

Library: Council member Gripne reported that the library has two upcoming events, the Glass-on-Glass Mosaic class will be on October 1st at 4:00 p.m. and The Awesome Halloween Magic Show with Magic Bob will be on October 19th at 3:30 p.m. all events will be at the Library.

Council member Dixon motioned Klick seconded to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 pm. Motion unanimously carried.

Ted Gray
City Administrator/Clerk

Jodi Dixon
Mayor