

MINUTES
PLAN COMMISSION
City Hall Forum - 100 State Street, Beloit, WI 53511
7:00 PM
Wednesday, August 3, 2022

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairperson Weeden called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chairperson Weeden, Commissioners Ramsden, Jacobsen, Finnegan, Toral, and Anderson were present. Commissioner Janke and Councilor Dunkin were absent.

2. MINUTES

2.a. Consideration of the minutes of July 20, 2022 Plan Commission meeting

Motion was made by Commissioner Ramsden seconded by Commissioner Anderson to approve the minutes. Motion prevailed, voice vote (6-0).

3. PUBLIC HEARINGS

3.a. Consideration of an Ordinance to amend Section 6.2.11(b)(4) and (6) of the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 19 of the Code of General Ordinances and Section 12.08(4) of the Subdivision Ordinance, Chapter 12 of the General Ordinances of the City of Beloit pertaining to minimum dwelling standards and lot sizes

Julie Christensen, Community Development Director, presented the staff report and recommendation.

Chairperson Weeden asked if the only thing that was changed was the terminology of the title since last meeting. Ms. Christensen said that the tiny homes reference was not in the ordinance itself, and what the ordinance really offers greater flexibility in the development of housing.

Chairperson Weeden opened the public hearing.

Susan Adams, 703 Milwaukee Road, the Secretary of the League of Women Voters, stated she is in favor of the ordinance to allow smaller houses here in Beloit. Ms. Adams said they have studied the housing and homeless issues in Beloit, and with this change, it would allow for more home ownership and decrease homelessness. Ms. Adams stated that there are about 50 percent rentals in Beloit, and there are not enough rentals that people can afford. Since the passage of Act 176 in 2016, it is difficult for the City to enforce housing codes if landlords do not maintain their properties.

Ms. Adams said that the new apartments are too expensive for many of the residents, and there are very few houses for sale that people can afford. This process would help

maintain stability of property and land use and maintain neighborhood character. These are issues that the League supports, and supporting this change they are relying on the past studies and consensus by the League on zoning, housing, and homelessness. This ordinance change would not solve all the problems mentioned, but it may give more people access and hope to afford a home.

Commissioner Ramsden asked about the studies if they have been published. Ms. Adams said that they are on the website under positions.

Commissioner Finnegan said that he could not rebuild his home if it burned down because it is only 900 square feet, and he likes the idea of being able to build 700-800 square foot homes, and to make more affordable housing. Commissioner Toral said he has been looking at studies with tiny homes in cities and most of them emphasize the economic social environment. Commissioner Ramsden said he has some reservations about it as far as possible negative impacts on neighborhoods and property values, and as long as it has to go through the PUD process and public hearings on a case-by-case basis, he will vote in favor of it.

Chairperson Weeden said that Plan Commission needs to look at the potential for it to impact the tax base, and Plan Commission needs to do everything to increase the tax base. Chairperson Weeden said that most of it is based off of new construction, and the City is very dependent on the tax base. Chairperson Weeden said that his concern with this new development is that some developer comes in and buys 40 acres and put in 200 tiny homes, and that property could be used for higher tax residential development.

Chairperson Weeden also stated that the City has trouble recruiting major retailers to the City of Beloit because the demographics do not support the minimum requirements for retail outlets. Chairperson Weeden said he is not sure if we open the door for tiny homes or lower value housing, how it will impact this and there could be the potential for harm to our community.

Commissioner Ramsden asked if that is market driven as to what real estate will be developed at that location, and can the Plan Commission do anything. Chairperson Weeden asked what are the market factors that drive upper housing development. Commissioner Finnegan said that Janesville has zero lot line condominiums with 1,200 square foot duplexes, and he has a lot of 450 square foot houses that he is selling and the guy buying those were most excited about buying those from him.

Commissioner Jacobsen said she supports the amendment change to the ordinance because it is a need for the community, and we do have high end housing being developed in the City. Commissioner Jacobsen said that our city is landlocked differently where a lot of high-end development is going in the Town of Turtle and Town of Beloit.

Chairperson Weeden said sure but why would we intentionally open the door for lower value residential development when we have the opportunity for and the demand for higher value development. Commissioner Jacobsen said it is a known community need and the wages for the people in the community can afford these size houses. Commissioner Anderson said that the PUD process gives the Plan Commission the opportunity to look at the highest and best use, and those conversations still need to happen with each project that comes through.

Chairperson Weeden said that there needs to be some safeguards in there to make sure that those two types of residential property developments proceed proportionally. Chairperson Weeden said that Plan Commission can look back each year to see what residential properties percentage is at to feel comfortable. Commissioner Finnegan said that he thinks the 1,000 square foot minimum is too big and this allows for flexibility. Otherwise, we need to reduce the minimum square footage.

Commissioner Anderson asked Chairperson Weeden if he wants to cap it at a limit to a certain number of units on a property, so that the developer is not building on a 40-acre property. Chairperson Weeden said he would base the quota off of the value, so it would be some percentage that is invested in new residential construction off the previous year or two.

Ms. Christensen said that it would be difficult for City staff to base it off of percentage growth. Ms. Christensen said Plan Commission can put in what they want, but if they make it too difficult for City staff, it will not work.

Commissioner Toral said he will vote in favor of this item. Commissioner Toral said that from the studies on the concept of this type of development, this increases population density, stimulates population growth, stimulates demand for businesses in the community, and from a social perspective it'll provide pathways to home ownership, credit, and stability for families.

Commissioner Jacobsen moved to approve the Ordinance to amend Section 6.2.11(b)(4) and (6) of the Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 19 of the Code of General Ordinances and Section 12.08(4) of the Subdivision Ordinance, seconded by Commissioner Toral. Motion prevails, voice vote (5-1), with Commissioner Weeden voting no.

4. REPORTS

4.a **Discussion of protentional comprehensive plan amendments to allow for additional affordable housing in the City of Beloit (this will be handed out at the meeting)**

Ms. Christensen asked that this item be laid over.

5. **STATUS REPORT ON PRIOR PLAN COMMISSION ITEMS**


Ms. Christensen updated the Plan Commission on the actions taken by City Council related to a variety of items previously reviewed by Plan Commission. Ms. Christensen said the next Plan Commission meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2022.

6. **FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

Julie Christensen outlined the future agenda items.

7. **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Anderson moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Finnegan at 7:35 PM. Motion carried, voice vote (6-0).



Tim Weeden, Chairperson