

**CITY OF UNALASKA
UNALASKA, ALASKA
PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
Thursday, November 20, 2014
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
7:00 P.M.**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Steven Gregory called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Roll Call:

Commissioners present:

Steven Gregory

Doanh Tran

Vicki Williams

Jessica Earnshaw

Commissioners absent:

James Santana

Staff Present:

Erin Reinders, Planning Director

Kelly Tompkins, Administrative Assistant

2. **REVISIONS TO THE AGENDA:** Jessica Earnshaw made a motion to add a zoning enforcement discussion to the work session. Doanh Tran seconded the motion. With a vote of 4-0, Item 10, a zoning enforcement discussion was added to the work session. Erin Reinders announced that the application for Public Hearing Action Item #6, a zone amendment for Lot 1, Parkside Estates Subdivision, was withdrawn by the applicant. Item #6 was removed from the agenda.
3. **APPEARANCE REQUESTS:** *None*
4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Erin Reinders announced that all Title 8 changes were approved by City Council and are now in effect. Mrs. Reinders also provided an update on the Infill Development Analysis. The analysis is nearing completion and is going through some fine tuning. Additionally, she notified the Commissioners of a City Council Housing Workshop, scheduled for December 2, 2014, to focus on general housing challenges and possible projects that would help alleviate the challenges.
5. **MINUTES:** *Planning Commission & Platting Board, October 16, 2014.* Chair Gregory called for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 16, 2014 meeting. Jessica Earnshaw made a motion, Vicki Williams seconded the motion. Chair Gregory asked if there were any further discussions on the minutes. There being no comments, Chair Gregory called for a vote, which was unanimous (4-0). The minutes for the October 16, 2014 meeting were adopted.

PUBLIC HEARING ACTION ITEMS:

6. *Application withdrawn and removed from the agenda.*

7. **Consideration of a variance to allow for a 20-foot lot width to accommodate a subdivision of Lot 14, Block 8, Haystack Hill Subdivision, located at 201 Trapper Drive (Owner/Applicant: Roger Deffendall; Property ID: 04-09-211).**

Chair Gregory opened the public hearing and called for a disclosure of any ex parte communication or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, the Chair called for staff presentation.

Staff informed the Commission that although no formal plat has been drawn, the property owner eventually wants to subdivide. They are trying to obtain the variance permit first. Normally the City requires a 60 foot right of way but in this instance the terrain does not allow for realistic access to the lot from the street. The Planning Department did receive one phone call from an affected landowner with questions. Once the questions were answered, they had no problem with the variance request. Staff found that the variance request met all of the code tests and is recommending approval of the variance request.

Billie Jo Gehring attended the meeting for Roger Deffendall. She stated that the applicant had been working with the City on the lot. Travis Swangel, a member of the public, asked if the driveway was going to be a City Right-of-Way. Erin Reinders clarified that this was not a Public Right-of-Way but a variance for a lot width requirement. This variance would allow for a driveway, similar to a flagpole lot, and would avoid having to have a shared access easement.

Commissioner Earnshaw wanted to know if by approving this variance request it would set a precedence for other property owners to do the same thing. Staff replied that variances are relatively straight forward with the requirements that need to be met for approval. Each application has its own unique set of circumstances that would need to be taken into account. In this instance the lot is surrounded by public right-of-way with challenging terrain but others may not be in that situation and also have existing buildings that need to be taken into account.

Chair Gregory asked if we would be seeing more of these same requests for other “land-locked” lots that don’t have street access. Staff responded that more than likely that would be the case since City Council approved the minimum lot size reduction and it allows for more opportunities to be put forward.

Chair Gregory closed the public meeting and called for a motion to approve Resolution 2014-24. Ms. Tran moved to approve Resolution 2014-24. Ms. Earnshaw seconded. Chair Gregory called for a vote to approve Resolution 2014-24. The vote was unanimous (4-0) and the motion was carried and adopted.

REGULAR MEETING:

8. **Receipt of Platting Authority approval of Resolution 2014-21 for the Nettleton Subdivision, a resubdivision of Lots 5 and 6 of A.R.C. Subdivision Addition No. 1.**

Erin Reinders presented one subdivision that had recently been approved in the Planning Department. Nettleton Subdivision was an abbreviated plat that fell under the guidelines that

allow for small subdivisions to be approved in the Planning Department and reported at a later date to the Commission.

Commissioner Tran commented that she was excited to see people subdividing and offering more opportunities in the city.

Commissioner Earnshaw expressed interest in a housing inventory survey or, at the minimum, a summarized view of what building permits have been issued for certain types of properties in order to get a current snapshot of what is available in the community.

Erin Reinders suggested that the Planning Department can provide a building permit summary as well as a subdivision/plat summary to provide a better picture of our current status. A more formal housing supply study is something the City can look at in the future.

WORK SESSION:

9. Consideration of Nominations to the FY 16-20 CMMP.

Every year the Planning Department works on a 5 year CMMP schedule that identifies anticipated projects and major purchases and their costs. This year the City is finishing up some of the federally mandated projects and is now looking to the public for input regarding CMMP nominations. Part of this outreach has been to mail out letters to local non-profits and posting information on facebook and KUCB. Additionally, this is also an opportunity for City Commissions and Committees to offer their suggestions. Staff will fill out nomination paperwork for any ideas that the Planning Commission agrees upon as a group and present them at the December meeting with a resolution to vote on. Commissioners are welcome to submit CMMP Nomination forms for their own ideas as well. Planning staff is asking for support from the Planning Commission for the ongoing GIS project. Currently that involves updating the aerial imagery in the GIS system. All Commissioners seemed to fully support the project so staff will prepare a nomination form and resolution to be voted on in December.

10. Discussion of current enforcement policies.

Commissioner Earnshaw reported that she has been receiving questions regarding the status of complaints that have been made to the Planning Department. She also mentioned that she has been receiving comments that the Planning Department is not treating complaints in a fair and consistent manner.

Chair Gregory asked Staff how complaints were handled and if the City had standard operating procedures in place for zoning and excess debris on private lots.

Erin Reinders stated that there are at least three different sections of code that pertain to dealing with enforcement issues. Due to small staff size, enforcement is complaint based as is typical of many communities of our size. Currently, depending on the issue, one of three departments will receive the complaint (Department of Public Works, Public Safety, and Planning Department) and then decide who the responsible department is for follow up. Staff then went on to explain how complaints related to the Planning Department are handled. Once a complaint is received it is followed up with research and a site investigation, where pictures are taken. If it is deemed necessary, a letter is sent out to the land owner informing them of the code violation. The letter


asks for a response from the land owner with a plan to remedy the situation. Code does allow for a \$300 per day fine if the complaint is not addressed in a timely manner. Historically, the Planning Department doesn't have much experience with fining property owners for code violations. It is the City's goal to resolve the issue, rather than punish the land owner.

In general, the Commissioners wanted to see stricter more consistent enforcement of Title 8 code. Chair Gregory expressed concern over a complaint based enforcement program in a small town and would prefer it to be more objective and proactive, even if that means hiring a position dedicated to code enforcement. All Commissioners wanted to make sure that certain individuals are not targeted. Staff agreed to do research on the topic and look into how other rural Alaskan communities handle complaints and enforcement. As this was already a topic of discussion by City Staff, it was believed that one option to look into is for a ticket to be issued rather than a letter sent. This would result in a more efficient enforcement process. Mrs. Reinders offered up the possibility of staff focusing on one particular type of violation and taking a comprehensive look at the city so no single landowner is targeted. At the request of Commissioner Earnshaw, Mrs. Reinders will update the Commissioners with a status report on enforcement policy and code in December or January.

11. OTHER BUSINESS: *None*

12. ADJOURNMENT: Chair Gregory adjourned the meeting at 8:04 PM.


PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 18th DAY OF December 2014 BY THE CITY OF UNALASKA, ALASKA PLANNING COMMISSION.



Steven Gregory
Chair

12-18-14

Date



Anthony Grande
Recording Secretary

12-18-14

Date

Prepared by Kelly Tompkins and Erin Reinders, Planning Department