

MINUTES
Central City Revitalization and Housing Committee Meeting
November 6, 2013, 3:30 p.m.
Council Conference Room – 2nd Floor City Hall

The Central City Revitalization and Housing Committee met on Wednesday, November 6, 2013, at 3:30 p.m., 2nd Floor, City Council Conference Room, City Hall.

Committee Members in Attendance: Chairman Todd Pierceall
Councilman Walter Kimble
Mayor Pro Tem Brenda Craig

Building and Development Task Force:

Mr. Gerald Sosebee, Carolinas Design Group
Mr. Jim Stewart, Stewart • Cooper • Newell Architects
Ms. Tina Smith, Tina Smith Realty, Tina Smith Property Management
Mr. Charles Gray, Realtor, Residential Developer
Mr. Jerry Fleeman, Industrial Construction and Maintenance, Inc.
Mr. Moises C. Miranda, Miranda Realty
Mr. Tripp McLean, McLean Homes

Staff in Attendance:

Mr. Ed Munn, City Manager
Mr. Ash Smith, City Attorney
Ms. Melissa Magee, Assistant City Attorney
Mr. Jason Thompson, Director of Planning
Ms. Rachel Bagley, Managing Executive
Mr. Flip Bombardier, Assistant City Manager

Chairman Todd Pierceall welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

ITEM 1: IDEAL Application: Dale's Small Engine:

Chairman Pierceall recognized Ms. Rachel Bagley for staff's presentation. Ms. Bagley stated Mr. John C. Loughridge, managing partner for the LLC that owns the building and property of Dale's Small Engine at 242 E. Franklin, submitted an application for an IDEAL façade grant. Mr. Loughridge asked the City's Central Business District Design Review Committee (CBDDRC) about plans to improve the outside of the building and received help from City planners in developing the design for the façade upgrade. As required by IDEAL guidelines, the CBDDRC has approved the planned improvements. Mr. Loughridge said he is pleased with the design provided by the City planners and intends to have the entire building façade improved according to the planners' suggested design. Contractor estimates for the improvements is \$8,100. The maximum award suggested in the IDEAL guidelines for façade improvement is \$2,500.

Committee Recommendation:

The Committee voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend approval of the IDEAL façade grant in the amount of \$2,500 for Dale's Small Engine. Mr. Loughridge was very appreciative to the Committee and to staff for their assistance.

ITEM 2: Downtown Parking Pilot Project:

Chairman Pierceall recognized Mr. Flip Bombardier for staff's presentation. Mr. Bombardier stated that the City has been contacted by a Downtown business owner regarding their concern of available parking for Downtown businesses. With the on-going progression of Downtown development and possible rehabilitation of the Lawyers Building, concern was expressed of how this development will impact existing businesses. At present, staff monitors existing parking spaces and the evolution for more spaces, and they will continue to do so.

Currently, the Conference Center Parking Deck is under-utilized. The deck has 219 spaces and was constructed with the ability to expand with three more levels, which would add 150 spaces. Very few citizens utilize it other than for conference-related activities. This could be due to unfamiliarity with how to use the fee-based automated parking system, or the fact that there is free parking available in other locations Downtown. Staff would like to suggest that pre-printed validation tickets be provided to Downtown businesses at a reduced, or possibly at no charge, to distribute to their clientele. This would assist in educating people on how to use the parking deck, while

providing a centrally located place to park. Also, this concept would aid in generating future revenues from better utilization of the parking deck.

Staff recommends implementing the Downtown Parking Pilot Program for a 120-day period, which would provide 'free' parking for Bangz Salon and their clientele to be used at the Conference Center Parking Deck. Upon completion of the program, data collected will help to determine how the project will evolve and expand to other Downtown businesses.

Committee Recommendation:

The Committee voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend approval of the Downtown Parking Pilot Project for a 120-day period. The Committee instructed staff to communicate clearly with the business that this is a pilot project.

ITEM 3: Presentation by the Building and Development Task Force:

Chairman Pierceall advised that the Building and Development Task Force is a citizen group of commercial and residential developers, builders, real estate agents, and architects local to Gastonia that came together to identify any issues, such as ordinances, fees, or City personnel, which would impede development and growth in Gastonia. The Task Force would offer possible solutions regarding said issues. The Task Force and the City would then work together on said issues to the satisfaction of the both parties. Chairman Pierceall then recognized Mr. Gerald Sosebee, Carolinas Design Group and Chairman of the Task Force, for the presentation.

Mr. Sosebee presented three items of concern for the Committee's consideration:

1. The building and zoning codes have confused the terms "Use" and "Occupancy."

Requested Action: Clarify with all departments the ordinance and the law regarding building and zoning code requirements.

2. Adjacent cities and counties (except for Belmont) are major competitors to Gastonia and Gaston County. Gastonia needs to acknowledge the changes in growth projections for facilities use and encourage recovery in the residential market, including partially completed subdivisions and foreclosed subdivisions.

Requested Action: In order that approved/planned subdivisions are completed, City policy should make every effort to utilize "vested rights" in order to facilitate the completion of older projects. Additionally, the City should implement the following in order to remain competitive with other entities:

- (a) Repeal the recreational impact of park fees;
- (b) For residential permitting, adopt flat water/sewer tap and fees of \$1,500 for ¾" water with sewer; and
- (c) For residential permitting, adopt a flat permit fee regardless of house size of \$800.

3. When obtaining a building permit and certificate of occupancy for existing and new building development, make the process accurate and transparent.

Requested Action:

- (a) Staff shall be required to put all requirements, review comments, and inspection comments in writing with supporting references to the ordinance or building code; and
- (b) Staff comments and documents shall be completed in writing by 5:00 p.m. next business day, including code pages with references clearly marked.

A copy of the written recommendations submitted by Mr. Sosebee is attached hereto as an Exhibit to these Minutes.

Committee Recommendation:

After much discussion, the Committee directed the following:

1. Staff will provide the Task Force with specifics on the building and zoning codes.
2. A representative from the City will attend a Home Builder's Association meeting to explain "vested rights." Property owners/banks need to be advised they can apply for "vested rights" that could assist them in getting unfinished /foreclosed subdivisions completed. The City Manager's office will be a conduit to hold these meetings.

3. For comparison purposes, staff will canvas surrounding municipalities regarding their fee structure.
4. The City needs to have a conversation with the County to ensure equality in the fee schedules.
5. The Committee would like staff to review the costs of building inspections for the last few years and provide the average building inspection cost at the next Committee meeting.
6. Staff will provide a report to the Committee at the next meeting on Wednesday, December 4, 2013, at 3:30 p.m.

ITEM 4: Other Related Matters:

Having no other matters to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.