

**MINUTES
CITY OF LONSDALE
REGULAR PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 27, 2021**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Voting Members: Jim Freid, Joe Kodada, Mark Ward, and Dave Webb
Council Representative: Kevin Kodada

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Lou Jirik

STAFF PRESENT:

City Planner Benjamin Baker and Public Works Director Russ Vlasak

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair J. Kodada called the meeting to order at 6:45 pm in the Council Chambers at 415 Central Street West.

2. AGENDA

J. Kodada asked if anyone had any additions or deletions to the agenda.

A motion was made by Freid and seconded by Webb to approve the agenda as presented. Vote for: Freid, Kodada, Ward and Webb; Against: None. Vote: 4-0. Motion carried.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

J. Kodada asked if anyone had any comments or corrections to the Minutes.

A motion was made by Freid and seconded by Webb to approve the Minutes from the July 26, 2021 Regular Meeting as presented. Vote for: Freid, Kodada, Ward and Webb; Against: None. Vote: 4-0. Motion carried.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

a. Update on Previous Land Use Approvals:

Variance No. 2020-01 – Improvements @ 114 Central Street East (J. Kodada)

The Planning Commission members reviewed the improvement plan for 114 Central Street East. Baker said that the site was currently under construction with new concrete curb and pavement being poured along the eastern side. The Commissioners all agreed that the recent improvements in that area have made that neighborhood look much better.

CUP 2021-02 - Two Curb-Cuts @ 420 2nd Avenue NW (B. Swanson)

The Commissioners reviewed a picture showing the property at 420 2nd Avenue NW under construction, with the curb opening removed and a gravel base installed for the driveway and garage pad.

a. Review Discussion, Action Items, and Updates from the August 30, 2021 Joint Planning Commission and City Council Meeting:

Development

Baker presented residential development information on 15-slides, including new home permits statistics, an updated vacant lot inventory, maps/info on potential development land within City limits and potential development land located southwest of City limits, along with City development fees. Due to the low number of vacant residential lots available, Baker said that Staff has reached out to the large-acreage landowners in town to gauge interest in development or selling. He said that valuable feedback was received from the majority of landowners. Baker said that City Staff has also compiled a list of potential land developers and builders to send the development information to. He noted that Staff did meet with a potential developer/builder interested in the Bixby property and land near the elementary school. Baker provided an update on commercial/industrial development, available lots, expansion areas, and land sales. Baker said that Kiehm Construction is interested in constructing a building in the Lonsdale Business Park in the near future, and he said that the City Council will be considering the sale of Outlot D of the Lonsdale Business Park, which is 11.4 acres, at their next meeting. Baker provided an example of recent and on-going public development, including the Police Department facility, annual street projects, school additions, and park/trail projects like the recently constructed Treka Park.

Signs

The group reviewed pictures of temporary signs/flags, permanent signs, and billboards. Baker said that based on feedback from the Council and Planning Commission, that billboards will not be pursued again in the near future. He said that the City is waiting for more direction from the courts on first amendment rights and free speech, before updating the Sign Ordinance.

Shipping Containers

The Commissioners reviewed pictures of current shipping/portable storage containers located in Lonsdale. Baker said that prior discussion and feedback was provided by the Planning Commission, but finalization of an ordinance is still needed. He also presented a spreadsheet showing potential regulations for shipping containers.

Food Trucks

Baker explained that the City Code does not address food trucks, and he suggested creating a food truck ordinance or policy to provide guidance for future requests. He stated that food trucks are becoming more popular and there is more demand for a variety of food options. He explained that food trucks have been allowed in the past, through park rentals and community events, but the Council agreed that food trucks should have to go through a licensing/permitting process. Baker said that overall food truck support has been received well in Lonsdale. Vlasak noted that littering and extra garbage cleanup at the Jaycee Park should be addressed when allowing for food trucks.

Solar Energy

Baker stated that the Planning Commission should discuss creating an ordinance to address solar energy/panels within commercial/industrial districts, since the City Code does not list solar energy/panels as either a permitted use or conditional use. He said that initial feedback was provided by the City Council that would encourage roof-mounted solar panels and limit the visibility of ground-mounted structures. Baker noted that Generation Building Center expressed interest in erecting a solar panel on their property after attending a Chamber/EDA Lunch-and-Learn event, where businesses were provided with energy savings and rebate ideas from Xcel Energy, Steele-Waseca, and MVEC.

Downtown

The Commissioners reviewed pictures of Downtown Lonsdale, along with a list of 14 City initiated improvements. Baker highlighted some of the past improvements and he said that the City has certainly done its part in improving the Downtown area. He stated that the EDA is currently working on erecting a few uniform signs to help promote Downtown businesses. The Commissioners agreed that Downtown property owners need to invest in their buildings and work towards encouraging thriving uses. Baker provided an update on three properties Downtown under potential ownership changes. Fried said that the Building Official should look at condemning places like the crumbling 101 Main Street South building. Baker said that the State of Minnesota is currently offering COVID Relief Grants.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Baker said that the City Council and Planning Commission recently reaffirmed their stance on not allowing accessory dwelling units in town.

b. Review the Draft 2040 Rice County Comprehensive Plan

The Planning Commission reviewed the 53-page Draft 2040 Rice County Comp Plan. Baker provided a brief overview of the Comp Plan, and he said that the proposed Land Use Plan mimics Lonsdale's 2040 Land Use Plan/Map. He said that Rice County is planning to keep the Urban Reserve District and everything in the Lonsdale area is pretty much the same. Baker noted that the County is proposing to change the Commercial corridor along I-35 to allow for some industrial uses, which is causing a minor stir with Bridgewater and Forest Townships. Baker noted that HKGI is currently working on updating Rice County's Parks & Trail Plan.

7. MISCELLANEOUS

a. Request to Revisit Animal (Chicken) Ordinance

Baker said that the City received a recent request to relook at the animal ordinance again to allow for chickens. The Commissioners said that they were not interested in changing the ordinance.

b. Curb-Cut Discussion

Baker explained that there may be support to adjust some of the curb-cut rules for parcels in the older parts of Lonsdale and for commercial properties. Kodada said that it would be good to relook at that ordinance, and he suggest that the new City Engineer attend an upcoming Planning Commission meeting to provide recommendations on the subject.

8. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Webb and seconded by Ward to adjourn the meeting. Vote for: Freid, Kodada, Ward and Webb; Against: None. Vote: 4-0. Motion carried. The meeting ended at 7:32 pm.

Respectfully Submitted:

Benjamin Baker, City Planner