

**Planning and Zoning Commission Work Session Minutes
September 7, 2023
Conference Room 1A & 1B - 1st Floor City Hall**

Call to Order

Commissioners Present – Carroll, Dunn, Ford, Geuea Jones, Loe, MacMann, Placier, Stanton, Wilson
Commissioners Absent – None
Staff Present –Teddy and Zenner

Introductions

Approval of Agenda

Meeting agenda adopted unanimously.

Approval of Minutes

August 24, 2023 work session minutes adopted unanimously with Commissioners Loe, Dunn, and Placier abstaining.

August 24, 2023 regular meeting minutes adopted unanimously with Commissioners Loe, Dunn, and Placier abstaining.

New Business

A. Downtown Columbia Leadership Council (DLC) Report

Chairperson Geuea Jones provided a report to the Commission on the current activities of the DLC. She noted, for the benefit of new Commissioners, that she was the appointed representative from the PZC and that several other city staff (i.e. Tim Teddy and others) were also members. Mr. Teddy noted that he and other city staff were actually “ex-officio” members that had not voting rights.

Chairperson Geuea Jones began her report by explaining what changes were occurring with the DLC’s focus given its newly elected Chairperson. She noted that much of the DLC discussion has shifted from what should we do to what can we do. Chairperson Geuea Jones also noted that the DLC discussion is pivoting to who should be involved with the group such that its members are representative of the area contained within the DLC’s boundary. This change in member representation is being partially driven by the improvement of the Arcade and Stockyard areas north of the traditional downtown.

Chairperson Geuea Jones explained recent topics of DLC discussion and a visioning session that may be of interest to the Commission included parking, homelessness, and overlay/zoning matters. It was noted that the DLC has not identified possible changes or recommendations relating to these topics or approached the Council relating to working on potential regulatory amendments. There was general discussion that prior to pursuing specific regulatory work on the topics under discussion authorization from Council would be necessary.

The Commission had additional general discussion on the activities of the DLC and a question was asked regarding the roll of business owners within the DLC boundaries and if the meetings were open to the public. Chairperson Geuea Jones explained the meeting were open to the public and that generally those that participated with the DLC were required to be business owners.

Chairperson Geuea Jones indicated that she felt with the changes in leadership and the renewed direction that the DLC was heading it was important to update the Commission. She asked if there were additional questions. Hearing none, she indicated the Commission could move onto the next agenda topic.

Old Business

A. Proposed Text Change – Substandard Lot Activation

Mr. Zenner provided an overview of the text change noting the last time it was reviewed was at the July 6 work session at which the original content proposed was agreed upon. At the conclusion of the July 6 work session, Commissioners asked if the amendment would be presented for consideration at the next regular meeting to which Mr. Zenner indicated that was not possible given the advertising deadline for the July 20 meeting had passed.

In the time between July 6 and September 7, the Law Department was approached and asked to expedite the text change. Mr. Zenner explained that in light of this request, he and Ms. Thompson went back through the July 6 amendment to identify any possible provisions that could be removed to simplify the ordinance. This review identified the need to revise the definition of “lot, substandard” and to eliminate the alternative “cottage-lot” setback standards that were contained in the July 6 draft.

Mr. Zenner explained that eliminating these alternative dimensional standards was not meant to signal that should not continue to be considered a part of the new RC zoning district, but rather as a means of protecting the existing built environment. He further explained that underlying intent of the amendment was really to create a “pathway” for existing non-legal substandard lots a way to be platted and that removing the alternative dimensional standards would ensure consistency with the way that setbacks are applied to other substandard lots that are considered “legal”.

Mr. Zenner also noted, that at the conclusion of the July 6 work session he and Ms. Thompson were asked to verify if the provisions pertaining to existing substandard lots within section 29-6.5(c)(1) of the UDC were needed or could be removed. Mr. Zenner explained that after reviewing the provisions and thoroughly explaining how the staff applied them in its daily activities, it was concluded that they needed to remain given the provisions applied to existing “legal” substandard lots. The provisions under discussion are to address the matter of “non-legal” substandard lots and how to create a pathway to allow them to be platted and become “legal” lots.

Mr. Zenner explained that an existing “legal” substandard lot is required to conform to all zoning district setback standards. If the proposed alternative “cottage” setback standards were to be implemented as proposed following the platting of a “non-legal” lot into a “legal” lot there would be a different set of setbacks that would need to be tracked creating a greater opportunity for staff confusion as well as unintended impacts upon the built environment. Given this concern, the proposed alternative setbacks were eliminated from the regulatory change. This removal ensures that the only substantive changes that will be brought about by the amendment would include the R-MF district is added to the definition of “lot”, a definition for “lot, substandard” would be created, and a minimum lot area and a minimum lot width would be established such that the staff can allow the platting of existing “non-legal” substandard lots.

Having completed his explanation of the reasons for the changes to the July 6 draft there was general Commission discussion. Concerns were expressed that the change would not potentially capture all the existing substandard lots and result in lots not being as buildable, in terms of lot coverage, given the larger required setbacks. There was discussion about the ability to determine what lots were “legal” substandard and “non-legal” substandard. There was also discussion about how lots that may not be buildable due to the changes would be able to become buildable.

Mr. Zenner noted that the work on the RC district would continue and that while the text amendment as revised may not provide the “optimal” solution that addresses the greatest number of lots it does fulfill the direction the Law Department was given. As to being able to determine “legal” and “non-legal” substandard lots, Mr. Zenner noted that such a process does not exist and that would be on a case by case basis as requests for activation of these types of lots would be presented. Mr. Zenner stated again that the purpose of the regulatory change was to create a “pathway” to move lots current unable to be platted to a point at which they could be platted so that consolidation of multiple lots was avoided. Finally, in response to the what happens to lots that cannot be built upon that are converted from “non-legal” to “legal” it was noted that they would likely need to seek RC zoning to permit greater buildable area.

There was also discussion on the benefits of the proposed change and how individuals as well as housing providers that specialize in “affordable” construction may benefit from the amendment as it was being presented. After additional discussion and an understanding that this amendment was only a part of a “broader” approach to address the issue of “substandard lot” activation the Commission voted to approve the amendment as revised.

Chairperson Geuea Jones asked Mr. Zenner what the next steps would be. Mr. Zenner explained that this item would be advertised for the October 5, 2023 regular meeting. He thanked the Commission for their input and noted that the September 21 work session would pivot back to discussing short-term rentals and the Council report with staff observations. Mr. Zenner explained that given the complexity of the memo it would not be distributed with the September 21 work session agenda, but rather provided at the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:58.

ACTION(S) TAKEN:

Motion made by Commissioner MacMann, seconded by Commissioner Loe to approve the agenda as proposed. Motion made by Commissioner MacMann, seconded by Commissioner Loe to approve the August 24, 2023 work session minutes with Commissioner’s Loe, Dunn, and Placier abstaining. Motion made by Commissioner MacMann, seconded by Commissioner Carroll to approve the August 24, 2023 regular meeting minutes with Commissioner’s Loe, Dunn, and Placier abstaining.