



## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### MINUTES

4:00 PM February 20, 2024  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, City Hall

#### 1. ROLL CALL

- a. Council Members: Gary Bode, Brent Lenssen, Kyle Strengtholt, Mayor Scott Korthuis
- b. Staff Members: Heidi Gudde, Dave Timmer

#### 2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- a. Community Development Committee Meeting Minutes of 1/10/24 approved as presented.

#### 3. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- a. **Downtown Parking.** (No written materials on the issue were distributed.) Lenssen introduced the topic as pressure is rising to address the parking concerns in the Historic Business District. He and Bode believe that the nature of businesses in this area has changed as more service-oriented businesses are located here - with slower turnover times - rather than retail where trip turnover is much faster. Also, because a visitor to town may park on Front Street and stroll through the HBD on foot – parking spaces remain occupied for longer periods of time. Retailers and some Council members are concerned that business will be lost as convenient parking for shoppers becomes more difficult to find.

The Committee discussed how much of the parking issue should be addressed by the city versus the businesses as parking is a function of business. Strengtholt asked if the issue could be funded by a Local Improvement District (LID). Korthuis noted that LIDs are generally expensive to administer which adds to the overall cost of the project. Korthuis suggested that the value of each property be used to determine cost distribution for a new parking lot downtown.

Bode mentioned areas near downtown that could be developed into parking lots and the committee discussed costs as compared to the cost of the city-built parking lot at Bender Park off of Aaron Drive.

Enforcement ability discussed was also discussed. Chalking tires vs. using a license plate reader was debated. What staff can / would write warnings or ticket vehicles parked longer than the allotted time. Gudde also noted that the City would need to establish a means of processing parking tickets. Mayor Scott suggested that enforcement be focused on Front Street and the code be modified if needed to have a 3-hour limit on the street but an alternate standard in the parking lots.

Strengholt recognized that the service industries like Elements and R&E filled spots when downtown was largely vacant – and their contribution to the downtown area should not be overlooked.

The Committee agreed that enforcement should be focused on Front Street rather than in the off-street parking lots. Initial strategies, they agreed, should include a letter to businesses letting them know that employees are encouraged to park in locations other than Front Street and that without cooperation the City may need to begin enforcement action.

Timmer mentioned that Teri Treat, from the Inn at Lynden, has been talking with him about potential alternatives and emphasized that it would be good to have a resource / map to show Front Street employees where they could park during the day without taking space on Front Street.

#### **Conclusions:**

1. Investigate a license plate reader – Mayor Scott to talk to John W. about this when he returns to the office.
2. Property values as a means of cost distribution for the construction of a new parking lot near the HBD – Mayor Scott to review.
3. Com Dev staff to review what section of code would need to be revised to identify a 3-hour parking limit on Front Street and potentially distinguish this from parking limits set for the off-street lots.
4. Com Dev to draft a letter from the City asking that businesses to have their employees park elsewhere. Draft for the March CDC meeting.
5. Com Dev to check in with Teri Treat and how the city can support efforts to encourage employees / long-term parkers to park elsewhere. Timmer suggested the city may be able to make maps that show other parking options for staff.

- b. **Recap of Joint School Board and Park and Recs Meeting.** The Committee discussed the potential impacts of a new school being built in

the Pepin Creek Subarea and if construction would negatively impact the TIF that was expected to be collected.

Gudde explained that the TIF collected would be based on the PM peak hour trips that are generated by the school. They would not be exempt from TIF or other impact fees.

Lenssen recalled from the meeting that a new middle school was slated to require approximately 20 acres. Gudde noted that the cost comparison of residential use to a middle school – using 20 acres – could be estimated. She concluded that the Pepin Subarea is likely not as viable as other locations in west Lynden because of the additional TIF levied on the Pepin Subarea. The committee speculated about other locations on the west end of Lynden that might be feasible.

**c. Text Amendment – LMC 5 Special Events Permits.**

Timmer briefed the Committee on the application form that was drafted for special events. Bode asked about the insurance requirement for special events.

Korthuis asked about the potential for the Chamber to carry a rider on the insurance as a service to the community.

Discussed the fairgrounds and potential exemptions after having two police-involved incidents there last weekend. Lenssen asked how communication can be improved between the City and NW Washington Fair and the group discussed options.

**Conclusions:** Committee interested in understanding what insurance options the typical homeowner would have when needing insurance for events like a block party.

Mayor Scott to talk to NW Washington Fair staff about the need to communicate with the city about their schedule. Special events code to return to CDC in March.

**d. Text Amendment to LMC 19.33 – Sign Code Revisions**

Gudde introduced that topic with some changes that had been made as a result of the last CDC discussion. Korene Samec and legal counsel had created new language on the regulation of electronic reader board signs in order to limit their brightness and the frequency at which their displays change. Also drafted was revised wording on sign lighting that would allow for neon or neon-like lighting components.

Gudde reported back to the group about signs that are frequently asked for but not allowed – saying that some signs are submitted too large but

that reductions in size are rarely an issue. The bigger issue are signs that are used regularly but are not permitted. This includes the use of sandwich board (A-frame) signs throughout the city and window signs which completely fill the pane. The current code allows sandwich board signs to be used only in the HBD and then only within 15 feet of the main entrance of the establishment that it is advertising.

Gudde provided photo images of signs like these throughout the city.

Lenssen and Strengholt expressed support for enforcement of the sign code that allows sandwich board signs only in pedestrian areas and not along public streets. The committee noted that providing pedestrian passage is important. Bode expressed support for businesses that may rely on the sandwich board signs as an important factor in attracting business.

The group discussed how many sandwich board signs should / could be allowed along one frontage as well as signs that are clearly off-premise.

#### **Conclusions:**

1. Sandwich signs – Expand the use of these types of signs to include other commercial areas but only in pedestrian areas (internal to shopping centers and not along public streets).
  - As currently written in the code, signs must be located within 36” of the building. Increase the distance that a sign can be located from the curb to 24 inches in areas where parking is not permitted (sidewalk bulb-outs).
  - Add that sandwich board signs must continue to be placed in proximity to the main entrance of the business being advertised but increase this distance from 15’ to 25’.
2. The group recommended that staff get feedback from the Planning Commission on this and other sign issues. Code amendment is currently slated to go before the Planning Commission on April 25.

#### **4. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

##### **a. Text Amendment 24-01 – LMC 19.20 ADU Code per HB 1337.**

Staff review has concluded with a recommendation to approve the text amendment with the condition that the covenant for owner-occupancy is required until January 1, 2026. The recommendation also includes a start to collecting 50% of TIF (the State’s maximum) on ADUs.

The committee understood the reasoning behind the amendment and the staff recommendations. Committee discussed the start of a TIF for ADUs as the beginning of 2025 rather than 2026 to ramp up for impacts. Council members may raise this issue when the item comes before them later this spring.

**b. Self Help Homes through Whatcom Skagit Housing.**

Bode gave a summary of information that he has collected recently on this program. Dept of Agriculture funds are used to create home programs in rural areas (cities with a population of less than 35,000). Sweat equity is used to complete a group of homes. This has been done in neighborhoods throughout the County.

**c. WTA Lynden Station.**

Scott Korthuis introduced the proposal that Whatcom Transit Authority has been working on with RMC Architects and City staff. The proposal would convert the underused Park and Ride station to supportive housing – likely geared toward families. The proposal will go out to bid. WTA seeks bid from non-profits specializing in housing and associated services. Phase 1 of the project includes 60 units including 28 three-bedroom town homes, 15 two-bedroom units, and 17 one-bedroom units. Phase 2 is comprised of 56 additional units and would require 2 levels of structured parking in order to meet current parking requirements.

**Next Meeting Date: March 20, 2024**