

MINUTES
CITY OF STEVENSON SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING
March 5, 2019
6:00 PM, City Hall

1. CALL TO ORDER/PRESENTATION TO THE FLAG: Mayor Scott Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m., led the group in reciting the pledge of allegiance and conducted roll call.

PRESENT

Councilmember Robert Muth, Councilmember Amy Weissfeld, Councilmember Paul Hendricks, Councilmember Jenny Taylor, Councilmember Matthew Knudsen

2. OLD BUSINESS:

- a) **Interim Zoning Control** - The City Leadership Team presents the letter from the Mayor regarding the veto of Ordinance 2019-135, information from "The 20 Ingredients of an Outstanding Destination," and the attached memo and revised ordinance 2019-1138 regarding interim zoning changes for the commercial zone.

Mayor Anderson and City Attorney Woodrich discussed the inability for council to take action on the ordinance at this meeting due to a recent Supreme Court decision, which requires multiple Public Hearings prior to adoption.

Mayor Anderson pointed out the letter regarding his veto of Ordinance 2019-1135 and also provided the document about creating a vibrant downtown which he discussed in the letter.

Community Development Director Shumaker led council through establishing ground rules for the discussion to facilitate a meeting that meets the needs of council and staff.

Council and members of the public discussed some restrictions and requirements outlined in the Interim Zoning Control (IZC); the timing of the IZC and the overall Downtown Plan process; managing through moratoria; whether or not single-family residences belong in downtown; how multi-family residences are currently allowed to be built as a cottage-style development and whether or not that should change; and what it means to build a structure for adaptive reuse to commercial. Comments from Jeff

Payson of 46 Degrees North LLC representing the Storie project on Leavens are attached to the minutes.

Councilmember Taylor left at 7:06 p.m.

Councilmember Weissfeld left at 7:33 p.m.

The consensus from council was to leave things as they are and not to pursue Interim Zoning Controls.

3. ADJOURNMENT - Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Approved _____; Approved with revisions _____

Name

Date

Minutes by Leana Kinley

Comments for the City Council of Stevenson – February 21, 2019

On February 21, during the Council meeting, Councilman Muth noted that the type of precedent that the confusion around the current zoning regulations is producing. He noted that it was a “very bad precedent”. From this side of the equation it’s a terrible precedent. The zoning regulations, which designed to be foundational guidelines for project planning and development are suddenly a moving target. The likely consequences of this lack of clarity is that it will stifle any development and move development dollars elsewhere. Who would want to try to develop something in Stevenson when you can’t rely on the existing regulations and your project might be rejected during plan review despite compliant at submission?

I’d like to describe the process of attempting to develop and build in the C-1 corridor for the Council. When I first started this project, our project team started with a question:

- What does the City of Stevenson need?

That question incorporated the following considerations:

1. What will serve the community?
2. What will fit into the community without being disruptive and
3. What will be an affordable capital venture that will produce a reasonable return on investment for the developer?

Given those criteria, the original plan was for a mixed use, commercial structure with residential units above it. We had identified a prospective tenant for the commercial use, which was proposed to be a bakery/restaurant. That idea was disallowed during the initial project scoping due to the moratorium on restaurants resulting from the waste water treatment plant water quality issues. That tenant is now gone.

The Council might respond that retail space is still viable. While this may be true from the standpoint of permissibility, the economic viability of retail space in downtown Stevenson is questionable from a financial perspective – and this is true for both the tenant and the property owner.

I understand the intent and desire to have a dense and exclusive C-1 commercial corridor that would shape the community and anchor the City both economically and socially. However, that is not what we have currently. I ask the Council to consider the following:

1. Currently, there are residences along 1st street across, residences on Leavens Street, a residence on the corner of Russell Street and residences along Main street that have been converted to commercial use. Residences abut commercial enterprise throughout the downtown corridor.

2. If the Intent as described in the Interim Zoning Controls Document is to “ensure that new construction or renovations of existing buildings is: Consistent with the historic character of downtown Stevenson” then interspersed residential structures maintains that character.
3. Allowing like-for-like replacements of existing residential structures in the C-1 zone does not change the character of the downtown corridor – it in fact maintains it.
4. Forcing commercial only in the downtown corridor changes the character of the area, which is at odds with the intent stated in the 1999 document.
5. The prohibition of residential structures in downtown has the equation for revitalization backwards. In instances of urban revitalization, the primary driver of improvement and in-fill is the residential reclamation of urban centers. People move there to live there first. Then businesses follow. Once there is a critical mass of residents, the demand for services increases which brings services into those urban centers. People do not venture into urban centers to start businesses when there are no dollars available or incentives for people to visit those shops to support those businesses. The critical mass of the population draws additional resources.
6. The City’s own data do not demonstrate that an exclusive vision of a commercial C-1 corridor absent mixed residential structures is anything other than an idealized vision. According the Interim Zoning Controls Document, between the years of 1999 and 2019, 15 commercial structures have been demolished. Fewer than 50% (7 structures) have been re-built. Of those seven structures, two are drive-through coffee shops and three are residences. That means in the prior 20 years, two commercial structures have been built.
7. These data portray the ideal vision of the C-1 corridor as unreasonable and as the enemy of good valuable progress. In this instance, our project is a multi-family unit proposed to replace a derelict single-family unit. That development is current permissible by zoning code. This is a good use of the space.

Now, to return to the story of this project. The multi-family project was determined through informal market analysis. We spoke with real estate agents, the Chamber of Commerce, other residents and the County Assessor. I met with the County Assessor and we discussed the merits of various development, the economic base of Stevenson and Skamania County and the input from the Assessor was that housing is sorely needed in Stevenson. Housing.

So we proceeded with a design for 4 units. The problems with 4 units on the Leavens St. lot are the following:

1. The lot is barely larger than a standard lot. It is 65’ x 100’.
2. It the narrow side of the lot is the street side. The lot has a 6’ elevation change on it’s long axis.
3. It has overhead power that either has to be moved underground which will require a 10’ easement and all of the costs associated with power, data and phone relocation, or the structures have to be setback from the lines 20’.
4. Two stories put the second floor windows in the view of the power lines.
5. Parking is required for 4 units as is a driveway which does not allow enough space to build 4 units, treat stormwater, meet landscaping requirements, meet the maximum paving/impermeable square footage requirements, allow an easement and meet setbacks.
6. In short, it’s nearly impossible to build 4 units economically.

So we settled on 2 separate high quality units. It was allowed by code. It was confirmed multiple times during pre-construction meetings with the City of Stevenson and it was permissible under the zoning code. Until it wasn't. And that, has an impact. It has an impact on the financial outputs made by the investor. It has an impact on me as a small local business owner trying to make a living. It has an impact on the reputation of the City of Stevenson.

So my final questions to the Council are: 1) how does this interim zoning prohibition on residential units going to benefit the City of Stevenson when it has so many detrimental aspects for the people who are living here and are interested in trying to make this a better City and 2) how does adopting there new restrictive standards facilitate development by eliminating the only two improvement project being proposed in the downtown corridor?

In closing, I'm asking the Council to be clear and consistent and fair. That's the burden of your administrative responsibility. You have to give us rules we can follow and then you have to stand by those rules the same way you expect us to be bound by them. Otherwise this doesn't work. If you want to change the rules, do so in a fair, transparent and public manner. Until that time, the rules should remain as they are and the interim zoning guidelines should not be adopted.

Thank you.

Jeff Payson