

MINUTES of the Vernal City PLANNING COMMISSION

Vernal City Council Chambers - 374 East Main Street, Vernal, Utah

June 13, 2023

7:00 pm

Members Present: Corey Foley, Brandon Parker, Stephen Lytle, Brian Eades, Troy Allred, Samantha Chapoose

Members Excused:

Alternates Present: Randel Mills, Ryan Pugh, Brittney Young

Alternates Excused:

Staff Present: Gabby Hawkes Blackburn, Assistant City Manager; Matthew Tate, Building Official, Gay Lee Jeffs, Administrative Secretary, Leslie Ivers, Planning Technician.

WELCOME AND DESIGNATION OF CHAIR AND MEMBERS: Chair Brandon Parker welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM May 9, 2023: Brandon Parker Chair asked if there were any changes to the minutes from May 9, 2023. The minutes were approved with there being no corrections. Troy Allred *moved to approve the minutes of May 9, 2023 as presented.* *Ryan Pugh seconded the motion. The motion passed with Brandon Parker, Corey Foley, Stephen Lytle, Brian Eades, Troy Allred, Randel Mills, Ryan Pugh, Brittney Young and Samantha Chapoose voting in favor.*

DISCUSSION TO CONSIDER AMENDING THE VERNAL CITY MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND ZONING CODE CHAPTER 16.58 – SUBDIVISION CODE

Gabby Hawkes Blackburn presented the need to update the subdivision code in Vernal City which coincides with the introduction of HB 174 by the State of Utah, which will go into effect in January of 2024. This bill imposed requirements on subdivision updates. Vernal City has been in the process of reviewing the Code, so it aligned well with our plans. The current subdivision process involves three (3) meetings with the Planning Commission, but the State will be limiting it to two (2) meetings. The City Council will no longer be allowed to approve final plats, which necessitates the creation of a separate board, similar to the Development Review Committee (DVR), for final plat approval. Ms. Hawkes Blackburn proposed process, starting with a preliminary plan submitted to the Planning Commission, followed by the design and engineering phase, and final plat review by the Development Review Committee (DRC). The committee's composition includes various stakeholders such as the Planning Commission chairman, mayor, utility providers, school district, health department, and fire marshal. The focus of the proposed changes is primarily on streamlining the process rather than modifying specific regulations regarding street widths, asphalt thickness, and curb height, which were already addressed by law codes or delegated to public works. Ms. Hawks Blackburn welcomed feedback

and suggestions on the proposed process, including the composition of the Development Review Committee (DRC).

Ryan Pugh raised the question of whether there would be a public hearing. Ms. Hawks Blackburn confirmed. Mr. Pugh also inquired about additional members for the board, with Brandon Parker suggesting involvement from the Public.

Ms. Hawks Blackburn emphasized the importance of obtaining the owner's notarized signature and suggested retaining all signatures for the time being and reviewed the list, which included eight signatures with the owner. Mr. Pugh expressed concern about the number of signatures. Ms. Hawks Blackburn was confident in their ability to track them down. Mr. Pugh proposed obtaining five out of the eight signatures, while Ms. Hawks Blackburn believed that a representative from the involved companies would be present to sign them. Mr. Pugh suggested designating one person for the signatures and emphasized the importance of developers providing a hard copy.

The discussion then touched on traffic counters and the necessary compliance with ADA requirements for park strips and sidewalks. Ms. Hawks Blackburn proposed streamlining the Minor Subdivision process by exempting some or all of the rules, with Brandon Parker agreeing. The aim was to make it an administrative process for subdivisions with four or fewer lots, including signature blocks for the County Treasurer, the Health Department, and the City Planning Director. The proposal would be written up and voted on in the following month. Ms. Hawks Blackburn proposed Master Site Plan update plan process which included the following 1. Make application to Planning and Zoning 2. Staff will send to 3rd party Engineer 3. Staff will send to Development Review Committee (DRC) (this is what currently happens) 4. Staff will send to Public Works 5. Findings from the Engineer, the Development Review Committee (DRC), and Public Works will be compiled in a staff report and presented before Planning Commission but not at a Public hearing.

Ms. Hawks Blackburn stated the County Health Department is responsible for monitoring septic system requirements and their proximity to wells. They conduct tests to determine the suitability of an area for septic fields. In the City Health Department in these matters is limited. Concerning traffic issues, Ms. Hawks Blackburn is worried about intersections and the impact of adding new housing. Currently, a traffic study can be waived by the city engineer, but since there is no designated City Engineer, Ms. Hawks Blackburn suggested removing that provision. Instead, she proposed having the Streets Department review and approve traffic studies to ensure that intersections are not adversely affected.

Ms. Hawks Blackburn relies on the Streets Department and third-party consultants for traffic assessments. She suggested including the Planning Commission Chairman, Street Superintendent, Public Works Director, internet and gas providers, notarized property owner, and fire marshal in the advisory group for signature blocks. She also considers adding the County Treasurer for comprehensive oversight.

Ms. Hawks Blackburn discussed the Minor Subdivision process for dividing land into four or

fewer lots along an already improved City road. This process is simpler because there is no new public infrastructure that needs to be built, and as long as the lots meet the size and area requirements in that zone, and there are no complications like unpaid taxes or easements, they can be subdivided.

Ms. Hawkes Blackburn proposed updating the City Code to allow for a streamlined Minor Subdivision process that exempts unnecessary steps. Currently, the Code requires going through the Planning Commission and City Council for approval, as well as obtaining eight signatures. However, Ms. Hawks Blackburn finds this process unnecessary for a single lot subdivision that meets all of the requirements. She suggests adopting a Minor Subdivision Code that is more administrative in nature, where applicants submit the necessary paperwork to Planning staff, and the final plat is signed by the County Treasurer, the Health department (if applicable), utility provider (if applicable), and the Planning Director or their designee.

By implementing this simplified process, the Minor Subdivision procedure would be more efficient and less burdensome for both applicants and the City.

During the meeting, the Commissioners discussed the Master Site Plan process and the challenges of determining when Planning Commission involvement was necessary. It was proposed to eliminate Planning Commission review if there were no public infrastructure issues, which received agreement from the participants.

Regarding signature blocks on the Master Site Plan application, the suggestion was made to include the County Treasurer, the Health Department, public works, and Planning Director, with no further additions proposed.

To address the challenges of the current process, a middle ground solution was proposed. The plan involved submitting the Master Site Plan to the Development Review Committee (DRC) for review, without requiring signature blocks. A staff report would be prepared, and the plans would be presented to the Planning Commission for review, but without a public hearing. This would expedite the decision-making process, even for last-minute applications. The idea of removing sections of the code that required Planning Commission decisions on fencing was also discussed, with the suggestion to establish a clear requirement for fencing without exceptions.

Ms. Hawks Blackburn proposed shifting the Master Site Plan process to the Development Review Committee (DRC) instead of the Planning Commission. Mr. Parker expressed support for this change, emphasizing the expertise of the Development Review Committee (DRC) and the need to avoid delays. However, Mr. Foley raised concerns about stakeholders not having a voice in the process and suggested calling a special planning meeting. It was decided to retain the involvement of the Planning Commission. Ms. Hawk Blackburn read through the relevant code section and proposed omitting redundant portions. The vote on these matters was scheduled for the next meeting.

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ADJOURN: There being no further business, *Brandon Parker moved to adjourn. Ryan Pugh and Corey Foley seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned.*

Brandon Parker, Planning Commission Chair