

MEDINA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 5, 2009

The City Council of Medina, Minnesota met in special session on August 5, 2009 at 6:05 p.m. in the Medina City Hall.

I. Call to Order

Members present: Weir, Crosby, Siitari, Smith

Members absent: Johnson

Also present: Police Chief Ed Belland, Finance Director Jeanne Day, and City Planner Dusty Finke.

II. Urban Residential Zoning Ordinance Discussion

Crosby inquired what the expectation was in terms of processing this ordinance during the special meeting, the discussion during the August 5 regular meeting, and future meetings.

Finke responded that staff hoped to use the time during special meeting to present the ordinance to the Council, answer any questions, and to have broad discussion about some of the policy questions. This discussion could continue during the regular meeting, and the Council could give staff direction on changes to return to the next meeting. The ordinance could then be approved at that meeting or with one final review in a September meeting.

Finke presented the regulations in the ordinance to the City Council, including feedback from an Open House, the objectives of the 2010-2030 Comprehensive Plan relevant to residential districts, allowed uses, and lot standards.

Crosby stated that it would be helpful to include Medina in the table attached to the staff report which compared regulations in other communities.

Smith stated that there were some communities in the table were not good comparisons. She recommended communities like Lino Lakes and Andover, which place more of an importance on maintaining some rural areas while developing in logical areas.

Council members discussed educational and religious institutions and the consensus was to allow these in R-3, R-4, and R-5 with a maximum floor area of 40,000 square feet. The consensus was also to remove these uses from the list allowed in R-1 and R-2.

The Council discussed “granny flats” as a housing option. The Council requested additional research from staff on how these may be counted toward the City’s density and how other communities regulate them.

Weir inquired if it had to be a requirement that garages were attached to homes.

Finke responded that it is a common requirement in suburban ordinances, but removing it certainly opens up additional design opportunities such as alleys and a more urban feel.

Council members stated that they would be open to allowing detached garages in single-family and multi-family districts.

Finke inquired about the regulation that garage doors be limited to 50% of the front façade of a home.

Crosby stated that there are homes throughout the community with a lot of garage doors facing the street that utilize attractive materials and design.

Smith concurred, and suggested that Cherry Hill may be a good example. There a number of homes in that neighborhood with three car garages where doors make up a lot of the front view. However, it does not detract too much from the look of the houses.

Council members discussed the issue of garage doors and supported removing the 50% limitation, but adding language which encourages design elements to reduce the impact of garage doors.

Finke discussed the issue of building height, and its dual purpose of fire safety and aesthetics. He stated that many developers and builders had brought up concerns regarding the City's 30 foot maximum building height. Because of the way the City calculates building height using the average grade, many buildings end up "playing games" by utilizing series of retaining walls in order to increase the average grade. This results in a lower building height without needing to change the design of the home.

Council members discussed the issue of fire safety and the fact that the history of the building height regulation was based on what the ladders of the City's Fire Departments could reach.

Smith said that the City would need to get a ladder truck sooner or later.

Finke stated that language was worked out during the Wild Meadows development which allowed taller homes if setbacks were increased. He also noted that the home could be built with a fire suppression system instead of increased setbacks.

Crosby stated that there were a number of people present, and that he would like to hear from them before the end of the special meeting, since this issue likely would not be discussed on the regular agenda until fairly late.

Dave Neumann (Bancor Group) stated that the increased setback for additional height worked well in Wild Meadows. He stated that they had spoken with City staff about how things like permeable pavers would be counted. While the current staff believes that these should be considered pervious, he recommended that the City include a definition of impervious surface which explicitly states that permeable pavers, porous concrete, and

other things are excluded. He also directed the Council's attention to the requirement that houses are set back at least 15 foot from buffer yards. Weir stated that the buffer yard already takes a lot of footage from the lot, and an additional setback from the buffer may be excessive. He stated that he understood a bit of a setback so that the vegetation is away from the home, but 15 feet seems like too much.

Bill Coffman stated that bonus rooms are very marketable above attached garages, and these could work very well with the granny flats that the City is discussing. He added that there are things that can be done to add a lot of living space without a visual impact on the neighborhood.

Mike Steadman recommended that the City look at Portico on the Green in Minnetonka as an example for accessory dwellings. He stated that some are even set up for elevators to improve accessibility.

Crosby suggested that the people who spoke provide the information they wish the City to consider in writing to staff. He concluded that this subject would be discussed later in the evening on the regular agenda as well.

III. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

T.M. Crosby, Jr., Mayor

Attest:

Chad M. Adams, City Administrator-Clerk