

City of Oregon Planning Commission Meeting

The Planning Commission met Tuesday May 16th, 2023, at 5:30 pm.

Members Present: Rachel Brunner, Roger Cain, Randy Cropp, Jeff Hallock, Mark Herman, Rick Ryland, Karly Spell, and Kurt Wilson.

Also, Present: City Manager Darin DeHaan, City Clerk Cheryl Hilton, Terry Schuster, and Mayor Ken Williams.

Present via Zoom: Heather Katkus.

Chairman Mark Herman called the meeting to order.

Mark Herman opened the Public Hearing at 5:36 pm to discuss Ordinance 2023-006 Authorization and Regulation of Solar Energy Systems. Terry Schuster expressed concern that some of the words and phrases were not well defined, such as what makes someone a qualified solar installer. He asked if the installer would need to have a certain license or certification. He also said he does not know how difficult it would be for the city building inspector to inspect the solar energy systems monthly to see if they were working properly. He thought it would be difficult to do. City Manager Darin DeHaan said it relates to the decommissioning of the solar energy system or if the city receives a complaint. This is for the long term, if a solar energy system becomes out of service or dilapidated. Mark Herman stated he sees it as if there is a complaint or it is brought to the attention of the building inspector as opposed to him doing inspections on a regular basis. City Manager Darin DeHaan said the electrical work would be done by a certified licensed electrician. He also asked the Planning Commission about the five-hundred-foot regulation, specifically relating to the project on Oregon Trail Road. The specifications for that project are two hundred and fifty feet from the nearest residential home. He does not know if the five hundred feet requirement is overregulating. He asked if we keep the allowance at five hundred feet and require a variance for anything less. Rick Ryland asked why the project could not be five hundred feet from residential property. He said it doesn't appear that it would hurt the solar project and the residents of the subdivision would be happier. He asked if the project could be repealed. He would like to find peace with all involved. City Manager Darin DeHaan stated the solar project would still be able to be seen. He said the legislative process has already been completed for this project. He has spoken with a representative of the solar project, and they have not completed the configuration of the project yet and they are willing to try to lessen the impact. Roger Cain said he has also been to a resident's home in the subdivision, and they are looking to improve their line of sight to the project. Rachel Brunner said to leave the ordinance at five hundred feet and then issue a special use on a case-by-case basis. Rick Ryland said another part of the ordinance mentions the screen shall not exceed eight feet. Roger Cain said perimeter fencing having a maximum height of eight feet surrounding the installation per the ordinance, is there a minimum fence height requirement. City Manager Darin DeHaan said the approved solar installation will be submitting a landscaping plan to the city for review. He also stated the language may be wrong within the ordinance, it should say the perimeter fencing shall be a minimum height of eight feet and a maximum of ten feet. He will amend the ordinance before it goes to the City Council.

Rick Ryland moved to close the public hearing at 5:51 pm, Seconded by Jeff Hallock.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Mark Herman opened the public hearing for a Short-Term Rental request submitted by MK Property Rentals for the property located at 101 W. Washington Street Parcel #16-03-180-009 at 5:51 pm. City Manager Darin DeHaan asked if the public hearing requirements were met. City Clerk Cheryl Hilton said yes. Heather Katkus, the owner of the property, was in attendance via Zoom. Rick Ryland asked about the differences in the fee. City Manager Darin DeHaan stated the fees are different for owner occupied properties and non-owner occupied. Rick Ryland asked about the number of Short-Term rentals within the city, and when would be too many. City Manager Darin DeHaan said the city has been notified of one that is no longer operating as a short-term rental. He said there are six currently and very spread out. He has received many compliments about these locations, and they are very good for tourism. Kurt Wilson said the city has limited places for tourists to stay when visiting the area. Rachel Brunner said it is important to have a number in mind because we don't have a lot of rental properties in town. She also said the housing development going in on the south end of town is for fifty-five years and older. She asked who we are trying to attract or bring into the town. City Manager Darin DeHaan said there are a lot of people who leave for winter and the new housing development will have an HOA that will maintain the property while they are gone, and that could free up other homes in town. He also stated housing prices in Oregon are very high. Roger Cain said there are some organizations such as Ogle County Housing that offer affordable housing. Maybe the community could partner with someone in the future to create more affordable housing. City Manager Darin DeHaan said price points for building supplies are high right now. He stated he will do some research to see if other communities have set aside a certain percentage of the housing market for short-term rental locations. Rachel Brunner said if you look at Airbnb's that are in town, they are typically smaller homes, which would be more affordable housing for first time home buyers.

Rachel Brunner moved to close the public hearing at 6:00 pm, Seconded by Randy Cropp.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Kurt Wilson moved to approve the April 18th, 2023, minutes, Seconded by Karly Spell.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Rachel Brunner moved to approve Ordinance 2023-006 Authorization and Regulation of Solar Energy Systems as amended, Seconded by Karly Spell.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Karly Spell moved to approve the Short-Term rental request submitted by MK Property Rentals for the property located at 101 W. Washington Street Parcel #16-03-180-009, Seconded by Randy Cropp.

Motion carried. No Nays.

City Manager Darin DeHaan said he met with Casper Manheim, the city building inspector, and has had many conversations with Council Member Kurt Wilson regarding roofing permits. With the recent storm damage there has been an influx in the amount of roofers in town. Some of those companies followed the law and completed the solicitation permit. However, there were some that did not. According to state law, plumbers, electricians, and roofers must be licensed through the state. The role of the city is to make sure the residents are being contacted by legitimate service providers and get the service they deserve. The city could regulate the contractors or just require a building permit to be completed for the project. Mark Herman asked how fast these permits could be approved during an emergency. Kurt Wilson said many roofing contractors have already inquired about the city requirements. A homeowner can reroof their own home without a roofing license. Roger Cain said there are two important things contractors should have, an Illinois license and an insurance bond. Rick Ryland asked about the insurance bond. City Manager Darin DeHaan said the insurance bond is a guarantee that the contractor will complete the project properly. Roger Cain said there are some contractors that are unable to get an insurance bond. Kurt Wilson spoke about OSHA requirements that need to be followed by the contractors. City Manager Darin DeHaan said currently there is no regulation on roofing permits. With the recent influx of roofers and storm chasers, the concern is should the city step in to help protect the citizens.

Jeff Hallock moved to approve roofing permit recommendations, Seconded by Karly Spell.

Motion carried. No Nays.

The Planning Commission set the Public Hearing date for June 20th, 2023 for a Short-Term rental request submitted by Jordan and Morgan Williams.

Mayor Ken Williams spoke about the Adopt a Grate program. This program allows a resident to adopt a grate and keep it clean. City Manager Darin DeHaan said Steve Rypkema brought this to the Sustainability Committee. He has asked the public works department to distribute the information when they visit a resident's home. This program is being provided county wide. Mayor Ken Williams said this is part of the Rock River Trail. Mark Herman said this prevents litter from entering the river.

Jeff Hallock moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 pm, Seconded by Karly Spell.

Motion carried. No Nays.

Cheryl Hilton, City Clerk