



MAYOR
Geno Martini

CITY COUNCIL
Julia Ratti, Ward I
Ed Lawson, Ward II
Ron Smith, Ward III
Mike Carrigan, Ward IV
Ron Schmitt, Ward V

CITY ATTORNEY
Chet Adams

SPARKS CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES
11:30 A.M., Tuesday, May 27, 2014
Sparks City Hall, Legislative Bldg, Council Chambers
745 4th St., Sparks

1. Call to Order (Time: 11:30 a.m.)

The workshop of the Sparks City Council was called to order by Mayor Geno Martini at 11:30 a.m.

2. Roll Call (Time: 11:30 a.m.)

Mayor Geno Martini, Council Members Julia Ratti, Ed Lawson, Mike Carrigan, Ron Schmitt, City Manager Steve Driscoll, Senior City Attorney Doug Thornley and City Clerk Teresa Gardner, PRESENT.

ABSENT: Council Member Ron Smith

Staff Present: Neil Krutz, John Martini, Karen Melby, Jim Rundle, Tom Garrison, Chere' Jigour, Armando Ornelas, Joe Rodriguez, Tim Thompson, Adam Mayberry, Donna DiCarlo, Rich Brown.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Council Member Lawson.

Comments from the Public (Time: 11:31 a.m.) - None

3. Discussion of and possible direction to staff regarding proposed amendments to S.M.C. Chapter 7.16 (Nuisances), including the addition of a "Property Preservation" section, and to Chapter 20.35 (Recreational Vehicle Storage). (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION) - (Time: 11:31 a.m.)

An agenda item from City Planner Armando Ornelas and Code Enforcement Officer Joe Rodriguez reviewing and discussing the proposed "property conservation" code amendments. In November of 2013 the City Council directed staff to prepare property conservation amendments to the Sparks Municipal Code to enhance the City's ability to address some common complaints the City receives. The purpose of this agenda item is to: review a draft of the proposed amendments with the City Council; share the public comments received to date regarding these draft code changes with the Council; and, solicit Council direction regarding the proposed amendments so that staff may prepare a public hearing draft for future Council action.

City Planner Armando Ornelas provided a synopsis of the issues addressed:

Private property parking:

- An amended description of what constitutes a Recreational Vehicle (RV)
- Where RVs can be parked
- How RVs are to be counted, included those stored on trailers
- Additional private property be allowed for RV storage, including front yard
- Conforming uses for RV parking, including curb cuts
- Paving surfaces to be allowed

Council Member Lawson said he is open to various types of paving surfaces to be allowed. He said he is not in favor of making certain ground covers illegal, or particular private property parking an offense.

Mr. Ornelas continued with additional ordinance issues:

Structural options:

- Mitigate visual impact from boarded-up structures
- Attractive nuisance

Yards:

- Landscaping: Address those yards that have gone to dirt
- Certain allowed ground covers and how those covers might be maintained
- Fences in disrepair

Appeal Process

- Using established criteria
- Reacts to complaints
- Hearing officer fees are in the budget; suggest monthly hearings

Overall

- City code enforcement officers would gain the ability to address additional complaints and problems.
- Certain conditions that are not currently violations would no longer conform and would require certain changes be made on properties.
- There is a need for community buy-in.
- 33,000 sewer bill notices announced potential changes; many people turned up for the public meeting.
- Staff suggests going to the planning commission with all issues, which will provide the option for public comment.
- Staff suggests allowances for hardship cases in a small number of categories, including low income.
- CDBG dollars cannot be used for funding to assist hardship cases.
- Distinguish between owner-occupied and rental properties: makes the assumption that rental properties are income driven and may not qualify for exemptions.
- Senior City Attorney Doug Thornley said it is difficult to investigate ownership of some properties in order to file a lien on properties that fall into disrepair, especially bank-owned properties.

Mr. Ornelas said in November 2013 the Council directed staff to look into the ability of the city's code enforcement officers to write civil citations.

- Staff suggests using a hearing officer for the appeal process.
- Suggest conducting a public education campaign upon approval of the ordinance, likely in October 2014. Staff suggest effective date of new ordinance be December 1, 2014.
- Some council members suggested one full year be allowed for citizens to be made aware of new ordinances and time to bring properties to new conforming standards.

Public Comment:

- Mr. Frank Istrice: Favors decomposed granite (DG) to be used in driveways; wants City to decide what they will do bring certain properties to a better standard.

Senior City Attorney Doug Thornley said the city is required to maintain safe conditions from public right-of-ways and that Public Works may need to be advised of certain areas and conditions needing attention.

Mr. Ornelas said staff will need to give further thought to requirements for front yard versus back yard. He said current recommendations do not include commercial requirements because not many commercial violations have been received and usually those complaints are addressed. Commercial has not been a big problem.

Council Member Julia Ratti asked staff to revisit vacant building registration requirements. Mr. Ornelas said trees on private property are the responsibility of the property owner. When issues encroach on the public right-of-way, the city has the option to trim.

4. Presentation and workshop on the draft Sign Code of Sparks Municipal Code Chapter 20.56. (FOR POSSIBLE ACTION) (Time: 12:29 p.m.)

An agenda item from Senior Planner Karen Melby and Senior Planner Tim Thompson presenting information on the draft Sign Code of Sparks Municipal Code Chapter 20.56.

Senior Planner Karen Melby reviewed the draft Sign Code:

- Digital sign technology has not been addressed in the sign code and is now being considered.
- The city has some regulations that are difficult to interpret for compliance and for staff to track, especially Maximum Allowable Sign Area(s)
- Staff proposes code that combines types of illumination, maximum allowable sign area, maximum number of signs.
- Staff proposes moving the sign section to the beginning of the code, transferring from the end of the code.
- Temporary signs, portable signs, digital signs, "daily" signs, visual clutter, the issue of digital signs versus temporary signs in numbers per business; banners on vacant buildings, content neutral signs (especially real estate signs), signs on private property, and sign conformation issues during an election period were discussed.

Public comment:

- Lori Wray, representing Scenic Nevada, discussed the visual impact on the community; said strong sign control is pro-business, not anti-business. Ms. Wray said her comments were directed toward digital signs.
- The issue of digital signs facing residential properties was discussed by Council Member Ratti.
- Grandfathered sign standards were discussed by staff and council.
- Tom Weatherby of YESCO discussed
 - digital non-conforming signs and concerns that the way the code is written too strict;
 - the 8-second billboard hold time is too long;
 - not allowing video is restrictive and should be considered on a case-by-case basis;
 - canopy signs are not defined;
 - murals are not defined, but allowed;
 - channel letters is a good way to go;
 - definition should be considered regarding commercial messages that are not necessarily signs, like a stripe around a building that draws attention to a building.
- Senior City Attorney Doug Thornley said the definition of a mural was discussed as part of content neutrality and free speech; they are purposely undefined and purposefully allowed. Murals are described as “painted.” In many cases murals are painted without permits.

5. Comments

5.1 Comments from the Public (Time: 12:13 p.m.) - None

5.2 Comments from City Council and City Manager (Time: 12:13 p.m.) - None

6. Adjournment (Time: 12:13 p.m.)

Council was adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

GENO R. MARTINI, Mayor

ATTEST:

Teresa Gardner, City Clerk

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