

WORK SESSION

A joint work session was held by the Mayor and City Council and the Norfolk Planning Commission of the City of Norfolk, Nebraska, on Thursday, December 4, 2014 beginning at 5:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, 309 North 5th Street, Norfolk, Nebraska.

The following City Council members were present: Mayor Sue Fuchtman and Councilpersons Clausen, Fauss, Lange, and Merrill. Absent: Granquist, Murren, Pfeil, and Moenning. A quorum of City Council members was not present.

The following Planning Commission members were present: Sue Kasper-Beckman, Marty Griffith, JJ Snodgrass (via conference call), Brian Lundy, Merlin Milander, Phil Fisher, and Barb Marsh.

Staff members present were Public Works Director Dennis Smith, Assistant City Engineer Mark Dolechek, City Clerk Beth Deck, Economic Development Director Courtney Dentlinger, Communications Director Diane Becker, Housing Director Gary Hilkemann, Emergency Management Coordinator Faythe Petersen, Prevention Manager Trent Howard, Finance Officer Randy Gates, Building Official Steve Nordhues, and Economic Development Property Coordinator Candace Alder.

Others present were: Ron Schmidt, Don Wisnieski, and Pete Rizzo.

The media was represented by Greg Wees, Norfolk Daily News; Dylan Ryder, US92.

Notice of the meeting was given in advance by publication in the Norfolk Daily News, and notice of the meeting was given to the Mayor and all members of the Council prior to the meeting.

The Mayor presided and the City Clerk recorded the proceedings.

The Mayor informed the public about the location of the current copy of the Open Meetings Act posted in the meeting room and accessible to members of the public.

Discussion of Housing Issues

Members of the Norfolk Area Housing Taskforce, which has been meeting and discussing housing issues for the last 16-18 months, present were:

Russ Wilcox, Midwest Bank
Rob Merrill, Marathon Press (Councilmember)
Tom Higginbotham, NENEDD Director
Don Wisnieski, Wisnieski Construction, Homebuilders Association
Mark Zimmerer, Chamber of Commerce
Jake Claussen, FRHS
Susan James, Norfolk Board of Realtors
Gary Hilkemann, Norfolk Housing Agency
Pete Rizzo, Northeast Community College
Courtney Dentlinger, Economic Development Director

Dentlinger presented a slide show, dated December 2, 2014, on findings and recommendations of the Norfolk Area Housing Taskforce. The Taskforce found “there is a serious and escalating housing crisis in the Norfolk Area” and concluded that, “The community’s housing shortage is significant and is negatively impacting existing employers and the region’s ability to recruit additional employers. The market is not responding quickly enough to resolve the issue. Steps must be taken to intervene to encourage housing development in order to ensure the continued growth of the community.”

Also discussed/suggested:

Post job notifications at Northeast Community College

Majority of builders are not doing spec homes

Builders are not developers

Housing shortage but mainly shortage of those willing to take a risk and build a spec home

Housing shortage but also depressed rents; median income isn’t high enough in Madison County

Will take a collaborative effort

Keeping costs down is critical – too many regulations

Retirement development feasibility to open up family homes

Sidney, NE developed land for housing

Business problem – maybe large employers would build multi-family units for employees

Businesses don’t want to manage properties

Need to eliminate risk in developing properties

TIF regulations

Comprehensive Plan update

Susan James, Norfolk Board of Realtors, shared information from a realtor’s perspective. In 2011 there were 511 sales in multiples and in 2014 there have only been 420. The average sale price has increased from \$113,650 in 2009 to \$139,750 in 2014. James said provided the following information on listings with realtors: 13 listings -- \$75,000 to \$100,000; 8 listings -- \$100,000 to \$125,000; 6 listings -- \$150,000 to \$200,000; 3 listings -- \$225,000 to \$250,000 one was a townhome, one an acreage and one on the market for over 90 days; \$250,000 to \$300,000 is the same situation with little or nothing to show; 4 listings -- \$300,000 to \$350,000; and 9 listings over \$350,000.

Wilcox suggested a subgroup of Housing Taskforce members, business people, landowners, city officials and others discuss and develop options to the housing issues.

Smith stated a new TIF housing project is being developed soon and also emphasized the need to be careful to not shift infrastructure costs to utility customers. Smith said a Comprehensive Plan won’t solve the housing problem since the main issue is identifying property with a willing seller which is close to utilities and in a concentrated area. The key is to find a developer and someone to back the risk without needing to make a lot of money.

Higginbotham stated one of the issues is identifying all the tools necessary with the biggest barrier being funding. Higginbotham also stated the group needs to work with surrounding communities.

Wilcox challenged everyone to think outside of the box to help solve the problems and the Housing Taskforce will continue to meet.

There being no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

Sue Fuchtman
Mayor

ATTEST:

Elizabeth A. Deck
City Clerk

(S E A L)