

WORK SESSION

The Mayor, City Council and City staff of the City of Norfolk, Nebraska met on Monday, June 6, 2022, beginning at 4:00 p.m. in the Administration Training Room, 309 N 5th Street, Norfolk, Nebraska.

The following elected officials were present: Mayor Josh Moenning, Councilmembers Shane Clausen, Corey Granquist, Kory Hildebrand, Gary L. Jackson, Andrew McCarthy, Rob Merrill and Thad Murren. Absent: Frank Arens.

Staff members present were City Administrator Andy Colvin, Assistant City Administrator Scott Cordes, City Attorney Danielle Myers-Noelle, City Clerk Brianna Duerst, City Planner Val Grimes, Finance Officer Randy Gates, Economic Developer Candice Alder, Street Superintendent Will Elwell, City Engineer Steven Rames, Assistant City Engineer Anna Allen, Information Systems Manager Brad Andersen, Communications Manager Nick Stevenson, Director of Administrative Services Lyle Lutt and Jerry Guenther with Norfolk Daily News.

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 Council President informed the public about the location of the current copy of the Open Meetings Act accessible to members of the public.

Highway Corridor Overlay

Moenning said the highway corridor overlay concept has been discussed by subcommittees and other avenues over the last year. The ordinance has gone through one round of council approval, and will be considered on second reading at the June 6, 2022 City Council meeting. The premise for the ordinance is to create a base of guidelines for new development. It does not look to alter something that already exists. Focuses on new development on the city's major corridors to make the city look and feel nice and maximize property values along corridor.

Brad Love, Love Signs, said he has been in the billboard business for 40 years and spoke against the change proposed in the ordinance requiring billboards to have a conditional use permit. Love said there are already a lot of state, local and federal regulations. Love said this would be a big change and would like more discussion. Love asked that elected officials removed the section related to billboards out of the proposed ordinance to allow more time to come up with new or better ideas.

City Planner Val Grimes said that section could be removed and there could be further conversation related to the city's overall signage code in the next 6-8 months.

Love said there are plenty of regulations already. With a conditional use permit, the process puts a spotlight on things and it is already hard enough to secure and keep locations. Love would like

a deeper discussion and said he is willing to discuss and work with city staff to come up with a better ordinance.

Councilmember Jackson noted if there are no regulations, there is no way to protect the city. The overlay is our way of saying this is what we'd like to see along major corridors.

Grimes said she counted 54 billboard signs along Hwy 81 and Hwy 275. City code does not have anything that says billboards have to be certain distance apart. Grimes also explained that there are two categories of signs, free standing and building signs. If a business only wants a building sign and does not want any free standing signs, the 300 square feet of free standing signage can be used for a billboard sign and the business only uses up building square footage.

Moenning said, when the corridor overlay was initially thought about, billboards were not a thought and said it would be reasonable to take another look at billboards specifically. We do not want this to make a case where it is more difficult for someone to do business in the City of Norfolk. Moenning is not opposed to pulling this section out of the code and said we can work on modernizing the overall signage code.

Moenning also discussed the section related to temporary merchants. The code would require that they only be there during operating hours and feels this is too burdensome. Would proposed the following amendments – pull billboard and remove temporary merchant provision.

Clausen said he agrees new development is what we are trying to target, but said some new development will be going on property to be redeveloped. Clausen has concerns that this will be problematic for small lots. Clausen also questioned the ability to keep up with current trends and feels the process should be made easier.

Moenning noted there is a strong exemption for redevelopment and said the point is not to make it more difficult to do business in Norfolk, but to have an eye toward community beautification. Moenning said the policy has been discussed at length and sees no reason to delay any further.

Councilmember Hildebrand asked what we would do with a newly purchased property along the corridor that was purchased for a specific purpose for which the proposed ordinance would require a conditional use permit.

Moenning said the ordinance does not say the business cannot go there, there is just an extra step the business owner needs to take by getting a conditional use permit. Moenning said he does not think any of the rules within the ordinance are over burdensome and noted there is a very rigorous waiver and exception process.

Clausen expressed concern with landscaping and parking requirements.

Grimes discussed parking and landscaping requirements that are already in code. Grimes said she does not feel that the landscaping requirements in this code are much more restrictive than what is in code already.

Merrill asked if a Highway Corridor overlay review board could be created. Grimes explained the ordinance allows review to be completed by staff or by a board review.

Storm Sewer Jetting Update

Street Superintendent Will Elwell, provided an update to elected officials on storm sewer jetting. Elwell said staff have been jetting for about 8 weeks. There are significant amounts of trash in storm sewer pipes. Most trash is going to the Transfer Station and the dirt and gravel has been taken to Porters. Elwell said he would guess the pipes have not ever been jetted. From April 26 to June 3, staff hauled approximately 55 loads from the pipes and dumped 200 ton of trash.

Councilmember Jackson asked how often the pipes should be jetted. Elwell said he is hoping to do the entire city in five years and then continue on a rotation. Next, staff will be working on ditching, concentrating on Omaha Avenue the rest of this week. The pipes will not drain well until that portion is complete.

Public Works Director Steven Rames said, one nice thing about doing it ourselves, at least this first time, is that staff is learning a lot about the system.

American Rescue Plan Funds

City Administrator Andy Colvin said the American Rescue Plan Funds have turned into fairly flexible funds. Colvin said one particular idea to propose includes two things: 1) Council Chambers could use an upgrade to the voting system with more advanced technology with better features for council members and the public, and 2) Looking at conversion to Office 365. Will open a lot more capabilities across the board but is not an inexpensive conversion. Need to ensure we have the infrastructure to support so will need to upgrade our servers. Can come forward at next meeting to authorize up to \$200,000 for these expenses as a way to take advantage of some one-time funding that we have.

Information Systems Manager Brad Andersen said the current City Council voting system is very analog. Would be looking to modernize and bring up to par with other Council Chambers in the area. Regarding the server, Andersen said we need to have a good foundation in place to convert to Office 365. Current email system is at end of life.

Councilmember Merrill asked how long Office 365 has been around. Andersen said it has been out for 8-9 years. Microsoft is making the push toward Office 365 as it has extra security features. Having the flexibility and instantaneous security protections of Office 365 is significant.

Merrill asked if there was any concern Office 365 will morph into something else. Andersen said it shouldn't, once we have the foundation in place to sync things up, everything else done in the cloud.

Josh Moenning
Mayor

ATTEST:

Brianna Duerst
City Clerk
(S E A L)