



PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEETING

LIBRARY PROGRAM ROOM
808 S 7th AVENUE, SAFFORD
THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017
5:30 PM

MINUTE RECORD

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Gene Fowler, Chairman; E.C. “Buff” Cunningham III, Commissioner; John Q. Figueroa, Commissioner; Tracey O’Donnal, Commissioner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Diane Junion, Vice-Chair; James F. Moser, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT: Dustin Welker, Planning & Community Development Director; Amber Hogle, Administrative Assistant; Cade Bryce, IT Specialist; James Ruiz, Building Inspector

OTHERS PRESENT:

1. **WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Fowler called the meeting to order at 5:36 p.m.
2. **ROLL CALL:** Vice-Chair Junion was not available to attend the meeting due to a previously scheduled school board meeting. Commissioner Moser was unable to attend the meeting.
3. **PUBLIC COMMENT ON AGENDA:** None
4. **MINUTES:** It was motioned by Commissioner Figueroa, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham and carried unanimously to approve minutes of the October 20, 2016 Planning and Zoning Commission Meeting. **MOTION ADOPTED**
5. **PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION:**
 - 5.1 **New Building Codes:** The Planning & Zoning Commission will review and discuss proposed building codes and suggested revisions to be adopted.

Mr. Welker gave an overview of the current building codes we use as well as an overview of the process we have endured so far as outlined in the packet (attached). Mr. Welker noted we have two Building Inspectors: Jaime Holguin has 4 years of

experience and certifications in this field. James Ruiz has been with Safford for 2 years and came to us from the City of Sierra Vista with 20 plus years of experience and numerous certifications. ISO (Insurance Service Office) rated the City of Safford well on our staff experience and certifications and our policies and procedures in place, just not on the building codes we are currently on.

Chairman Fowler inquired how these ratings affect us? There are two types of ISO ratings: insurance ratings based off of fire standards (The Safford Fire Department has maintained a 4 rating with only a volunteer fire department). The other type affects building today for mortgage insurance ratings.

Mr. Welker noted the Town of Thatcher and Graham County have expressed they are on board to adopt same code cycles as Safford. It would be convenient to have all local municipalities on the same code. ISO says codes only have a life cycle of 6 years and encouraged us to go to the 2015 codes not the 2012 for this reason.

The codes we are looking to adopt are:

- 2015 International Building Code
- 2015 International Residential Code
- 2015 International Mechanical Code
- 2015 International Plumbing Code
- 2015 International Fire Code
- 2015 International Fuel Gas Code
- 2015 International Existing Building Code
- 2014 National Electric Code
- ADAAG 2010 Standards

These we feel are most appropriate for our community's needs.

The Fuel Gas Code and Existing Building Code are new for our municipality; the Existing Building Code was at one time part of the International Building Code and is now a separate code on its own and needed for guidance on existing buildings.

Commissioner O'Donnal questioned, for example, if an entire house would need brought to code if a permit was obtained for an addition? No, only fix what you touch/change.

Mr. Ruiz stated the Existing Building Code deals more with commercial.

Mr. Welker explained we have modeled our proposed code adoption after Sierra Vista's code; we have been in contact with their building officials regarding various questions throughout the process.

Mr. Welker further explained that codes may be amended to a reasonable level. For example, the 2009 codes added a requirement for homes to have a fire sprinkler

system. Realizing this would be a huge financial burden locally, the state took action and passed legislation to not allow cities to require this.

Mr. Welker noted our proposed amendments focused on safety related changes from the 2003 codes to the 2015 codes, while also being sensitive to contractors and residents of Safford. Our Building Inspectors had a contact from trainings they attend and recommended Colorado Code Counseling to administer training for local contractors and government officials from Graham County, Town of Pima and the Town of Thatcher. There were 16 hours of training and discussion on codes during this two-day event, which was free for all to attend. Postcards were mailed to all local contractors and governments and advertising was administered on social media.

An example of a positive safety change in the proposed new codes to be adopted: carbon monoxide detectors to be installed in new homes. This is a minor change from our current code, but is a good need. There is also a whole new section referencing solar panels which will help us with the current boom in our community for solar panels. Building material lists have also been updated (strength, use, fire rating, etc).

Specifically, we are looking at amending the following items:

- Eliminate permit fee schedules
- Customizing design criteria tables: i.e.: wind loads, frost depths, temperature related items
- Eliminate fire sprinklers required in all residential homes
- Eliminate energy efficiency requirements
- Include minimum structural requirements
- Include exhaust safety requirements
- Eliminate Arc fault breakers in all areas other than bedrooms
- Include the requirement for all buildings over 7,500 sq. ft. to have sprinkler systems

Chairman Fowler questioned the fee schedule to be enough to cover our costs? We have not adopted that theory and have not received feedback from Council to do so. We are currently on the 1994 fee schedule.

Mr. Welker explained the reason for not proposing to adopt the energy efficiency code requirements is we feel that would place too much of a burden on local builders, buyers, and homeowners, however they may elect to build to this code if they wish. Energy conservation is a great thing, but we feel it should be the homeowner's decision. Only minimum standards will be enforced.

Chairman Fowler asked if the codes included manufactured homes? No, those standards are set by HUD and inspected by HUD qualified inspectors.

Chairman Fowler inquired if regulations for solar were included in the energy code? No, solar is primarily addressed in the electrical code due to the wiring, grounding, installation and equipment used.

Mr. Welker pointed out arc vaults are sensitive, homeowners do not like them, and they are more expensive. Mr. Ruiz added vacuums are notorious for kicking off breakers which is frustrating to the homeowner.

Mr. Welker explained the last time codes were officially adopted was in 1994. At that time it became a requirement for buildings 7500 square feet and over to be sprinkled. In the most recent codes, the minimum square footage requirement is 6000 square feet, however there are different building improvements that may be used to make structures more fire safe and the square footage can far exceed the 7500 if such improvements are made. After meeting with Safford and Thatcher's Fire Chiefs, staff is recommending to continue the requirement at 7500 square feet. Buildings larger than 7500 square feet would be hard to fight fire with the resources we currently have.

Commissioner Cunningham inquired if the requirement includes residential and commercial? Staff will look in to this since we don't have very many 7500 square foot homes. Mr. Ruiz added the building code would require sprinklers if a certain amount of square footage was exceeded. Mr. Welker noted verbiage is changing to "may install" instead of "shall install" that way code requirements will still be followed if someone decided to include a sprinkler system.

Mr. Welker discussed the height of fences. The new code includes a 7 foot requirement before a permit would be required, however our zoning code trumps the building code and it says 6 feet is the maximum height a fence can be in a residential zoned area. At this point, we do not require permits for fences under 6 feet but Council suggested receiving feedback from contractors and the Commission as we went through the code evaluation process. Mr. Welker suggested the permit could be issued at no cost just to regulate the wall heights.

Commissioner Figueroa asked if the 6 feet height was due to the fire code? Yes, fire is part of the reasoning, other reasons are for emergency access and aesthetics. There is also a maximum 3 foot height requirement in front yard setback areas which is for police safety to see in yard/neighborhood and also for aesthetics.

Commissioner O'Donnal expressed her opinion to not require permits for fences and walls just because of the potential expense to homeowner/buyer. If the city issues a permit then in cases where the property line is not clear, the City would likely require the homeowner to get a survey to verify property lines.

Chairman Fowler agrees.

Mr. Welker addressed the intent to ease in to the new code requirements; there will not be a hard start date for enforcement; it will be a learning curve for all.

Commissioner O'Donnal inquired about the other towns intention to adopt? They will look at what we adopt and model their adoption after ours.

Chairman Fowler stated he appreciated the presentation and due diligence of all involved and informing the Commission of changes involved. He agrees with exceptions to adapt to our area.

Commissioner O'Donnal wished to add her appreciation for Safford being proactive, forward thinking and leading the charge, staying updated and setting the example in having the leadership to invite other communities to join. Safford has a pattern of doing that which brings the whole community together.

Mr. Ruiz added with the recent hail storm damage, contractors from out of state were inquiring why our city was so far behind in codes since they were trying to improve roof quality.

6. **PROJECT UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Sun Pumps Completed

McDonalds Rebuild—opening in 2 weeks

Mt Graham Shopping Center Façade Remodel Complete; adding signs

20th Avenue Median Grant submitted recently to add street lights and landscape. If we receive (will know in August), the property owner will invest in a 30-foot monument sign.

McDougals Funeral Home Remodel complete

Sunshine Valley Apartments Remodel complete

Great Clips next to Dr. Skinner's office complete

Subway inside Walmart complete

Vista Recycling Building complete

Lots of solar permits

Tierra Antigua Realty (downtown)—remodeled entire building; grand opening May 18

Baby Boutique moved next to Gingerbread & Co.; now offering women's clothing; also a recipient of a **façade grant**

Glenn Meadows Park—working on with Public Works; grants received for this project from FMI and United Way; this project is an example of General Plan requests from community; this project will create reinvestment from older homes and enticement for developable lots

Central Avenue (west of Thriftee) redo of road in July

Commissioner Figueroa inquired about 14th Avenue: Still a high priority but still in search of funds for project (\$2 million total)

Chairman Fowler inquired about the new Circle K site as the “coming soon” sign is down: Slow moving, but as far as we know they are still in plans

Mr. Welker presented map of townhome property as requested at last meeting for information

Medical marijuana application questioned at last meeting: 85 acre farm in County, went through one hearing then application was pulled

Commissioner terms expiring June 30, 2017: Commissioner Cunningham, Commissioner O’Donnal and Commissioner Figueroa: All agreed to continue their seat on the Commission

Mr. Welker noted we still have one vacant Commission seat

7. **CALL TO THE PUBLIC:** None
8. **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING:** TBA
9. **ADJOURN:** It was motioned by Commissioner O’Donnal, seconded by Commissioner Figueroa and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m. **MOTION ADOPTED**

APPROVED:

Gene Fowler, Chairman
Planning & Zoning Commission

ATTEST:

Amber Hogle, CMC, Administrative Events Liaison
Planning & Community Development

STATE OF ARIZONA)
) ss
County of Graham)

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the Meeting of the Safford Planning & Zoning Commission, located in Safford, Graham County, Arizona, held Thursday, May 11,

Planning & Zoning Commission Minutes

May 11, 2017

Page **7** of **7**

2017, and approved at a Planning & Zoning Commission Meeting on May 16, 2019. I further certify the meeting was duly called, held and that a quorum was present.

Date:

Amber Hogle, CMC, Administrative Events Liaison