

PLANNING COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 14, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

Planning Commission Chairperson Valerie Hall called the meeting to order at 6:59 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members in attendance included Valerie Hall, Ray Smith, Jesse Christopher, Yvonne Lawrence and Adam Huff.

STAFF

Staff - David Keeley and Mary Schultz.

GUESTS

Guests - City Council Member Debbie Gaskin, City Council Member Bonnie Bradley, Gloria Squires and John Squires.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND MAIL RECEIVED

As there was no Announcements and Mail Received, Planning Commission moved on to Meeting Minutes.

MEETING MINUTES

AUGUST 10, 2015 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2015 regular Planning Commission meeting. Planning Commission Member Adam Huff seconded the motion.

Motion carried by all. Planning Commission Member Ray Smith - yes, Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher - yes, Planning Commission Member Yvonne Lawrence - yes and Adam Huff - yes.

NEW BUSINESS

As there was no New Business, Planning Commission moved on to Old Business.

OLD BUSINESS

THE KEEPING OF BEES

City Planner Dave Keeley stated several of the Planning Commission Members were not at the hearing. The minutes were verbatim, so it will allow you all to have a chance to understand what was transcribed at the hearing. There is a person who has a hobby bee hive and apparently there are several people that have hobby bee hives in town. Bee hives are not allowed in the city limits. City Council requested the Planning Commission to look at our codes. The person with the bee hives was given a certain amount of days to remove the hives and City Council extend that letter so we can figure out what to do. The public presented their cases and it is up to the Planning Commission to decide on an option to present to City Council. After the hearing on August 10th, the Planning Commission did not have a dialog, they want to have a full commission so they could have a conversation with the absent members and to think about different options. Dave put together a bee keeping options sheet to help guide the conversation. (Bee Keeping Options sheet on file)

Chairperson Valerie Hall asked if other cities allowing bees in the city limits for a hobby.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated it seems to be that cities either say no or regulate for hobby. Not regulating could either be for hobby or commercial. With the industry growth, people are more aware of bee keeping as an issue with the confined areas.

City Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated she spoke with a friend before the first meeting that has kept bees for years. He felt that you have to put a fence up for a barrier. He also thought it would be a good idea to have bees, but you have to regulate it somehow. I came into this discussion the same as I was for the chickens and rabbits, so as a person who will never live out of town, I like being able to have options in my backyard, but I want to be respectful of the neighbors. On the second page of the Bee Keeping in City Limits handout, Jesse read the second paragraph. (Bee Keeping in City

Limits handout on file) Jesse was thinking this regulation could help people that are having issues with bees in the city limits. That might mean Mr. Wardlow may still have to remove his bee hives.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated the towns that don't regulate bee keeping in the city limits use their nuisance ordinance. However, with our nuisance ordinance we try to do a voluntary compliance but if that doesn't work, then we have to sue them and go to court. The city then has to make a fiscal discussion if we want to sue someone over that particular issue.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher read the fourth paragraph down on the back of Mr. Squire's hand out. (Beekeeping Regulations in Municipal Areas handout on file) Jesse is wondering if there is going to be enough space. If not then this could be a problem.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated that Mr. Squires or Mr. Wardlow mentioned there were six hives or colonies surrounding Kettle Falls. Is there a point of too many or not enough hives or is there such a thing.

Gloria Squires stated usually bee keeper's move their bees during the winter. Also an idea could be that the bee keeper and the neighbors would have to resolve any differences or compliance between each other, but if they can't then the bee keeper would have to remove their bee hives.

City Planner Member Jesse Christopher stated you want it good for everybody, but also for the bees.

Gloria Squires stated that during the winter bee keepers feed their bees and also supply them with sugar water.

City Planner Member Jesse Christopher stated the summer is when the issues arise. Jesse asked if bee keepers can feed the bees in the summer time as well.

Gloria Squires stated not usually until early fall, but if there is a nuisance, like a humming bird feeder that is leaking it will still draw the bees.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher asked if the bee keeper could put out a bunch of sugar water on his property

would that keep the bees from going to other properties. Could that be a good solution for a problem like that?

Gloria Squires stated if people would use good quality humming bird feeder it would eliminate the leakage that draws the wasps and yellow jackets.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher asked if bee keepers can draw their bees away from other properties by putting out sugar water. Could this be an option for bee keepers?

Gloria Squires stated that it is an option.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated that it should be worked out between the bee keepers and the neighbors.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated the comprehensive bee ordinances state you should have a fence that is at least six feet tall and provide water on the premises for the bees. Dave stated he did not check Mr. Wardlow hives or if he had water for his bees, but he did have a humming bird feeder on his porch. No bees were seen in Mr. Wardlow's humming bird feeder, but I did go to the neighbors that was complaining and there were at least a dozen or more in each humming bird feeder.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated people should be able to have their bird feeders where they want them and have the bird feeders that they want even if they leak. That is the right we have as citizens.

Planning Commission Member Adam Huff stated bee's I like, yellow jackets no. I only get yellow jackets in my backyard. In two years I have only seen two bees in my backyard.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated he has a small garden and has only seen a couple of bees.

City Council Member Debbie Gaskin stated she has lots of bees in her back yard and would like to keep them.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated she noticed a few in her yard and didn't find them a nuisance.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated he looked into Mason bees, which are pollinators but don't have stingers on them.

Planning Commission Member Yvonne Lawrence stated that bee keeping is not a cheap hobby. Bee Keepers have to pay for the boxes, the Department of Agriculture for a registration form and the city permit. People have to be pretty serious before putting hives in their backyard.

Gloria Squires stated that education is very important.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated if bee keepers have to be a member of an association it would help for accountabilities.

Gloria Squires stated they have so many students and probably nine out of ten lose their bees because they don't know how to take care of them properly.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated he read if you keep bees you should have more than one hive or colonies just in case the queen dies.

Gloria Squires stated that is not true you can go buy another queen in Spokane or from a bee keeper. Feeding the bees during the winter is very expensive, you can go through fifty to sixty pounds of sugar.

Chairperson Valerie Hall asked City Planner Dave Keeley to explain option number two again. 2. Allow-Change Zoning Code to allow bee keeping.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated in our zoning code it is basically like a big excel spread sheet. On the top you have owner zones, across you have single-family residential and multi-family housing. You also have the different things that are possible, so on the bee keeping it states bee keeping commercial or hobby is not allowed in any of the zones. An option could be putting in the ordinance bee keeping as a hobby for single family residential or commercial is allowed or we could change the X to a P, which means it is permitted or we can change it to a C, which means conditional use permit, which means they can have bees but have to get a permit. If you stop with that there would not be any regulations. Option three would be to change those plus have requirements.

Chairperson Valerie Hall asked if they picked option two could we apply the conditions and the conditions could be purchasing the permit or getting a certification.

Gloria Squires stated it would be a certification in training.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated if we didn't change the ordinance could we make one of the conditions as a set back without a big hassle. I don't want to make it complicated, but want to protect the neighbors that may have issues with bees next door.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated if we do setbacks it would have to go into the ordinance.

City Council Member Bonnie Bradley stated those are the reasons why the first ordinance of not allow bees in the city limits was passed, because it was a nuisance. You are just re-opening up the flood gates that we just closed.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher asked if we make an ordinance is it easy to enforce.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated it would be a challenge.

Gloria Squires stated that dogs go to the bathroom in her yard all the time and that is a nuisance, but maybe if there is three complaints against those bees a letter could go to that bee keeper. If complaints continue the bee keeper would have to remove their bees. It would be like a warning letter.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated it would be easier just to say no, because it is so hard to regulate and to enforce those regulations.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated he likes the idea of the complaint letters.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher asked if the bee keeper could find a farmer and set it up on their property.

Gloria Squires stated you could but to maintain bees you have to be there to feed them and make sure they don't get diseases.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked if you say one hive per parcel is that one box or is that a stack of boxes.

Gloria Squires stated one stack of boxes is one hive.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked how many bees are in one hive.

Gloria Squires stated she wasn't sure, but it is possible. Two thirds of the bees stay in the hive working and the rest go from hive to hive.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked if we wrote up an ordinance saying that you are allowed one hive, how many stacks of boxes is that.

Gloria Squires stated as summer goes on the bees bring in honey then you stack more boxes and remove the ones that are full of honey. The process continues throughout the season. During the winter the bees don't go out of the hive.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated all of the stacks of boxes are just maintaining honey?

Gloria Squires stated that is true.

John Squires stated when you have two boxes you have about fifty thousand bees. If you replace your queen every spring, like you are supposed to you very rarely have a swarm. Then will also produce more honey.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked then in theory Mr. Wardlow could have fifty thousand bees in his backyard if he has one hive.

Gloria Squires stated possibly, but a lot of them stay inside working. I would like to see training and the letter of complaints so everyone can have an opportunity.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher asked if our lots are seventy-five hundred square feet. With our lots in the city limits being this size would we want to only allow one colony per lot? Jesse read regulation from the Colville ordinance regarding lot sizes. (Colville Regulations handout on file)

Chairperson Valerie Hall asked if we only have one person with bee hives in town.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated he was told six.

Gloria Squires stated she knows of hives behind the Catholic Church and across from the high school.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked Doug Johnson how many hives are in the area. He didn't know, but he felt there are enough to cover the needs of the community for pollination.

Gloria Squires agreed. There are probably two to three hobby bee keepers that maintain hives pretty well in the city limits. Also we are more than happy to do any training.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked if the Squires have hives in town.

Gloria Squires stated they do. They are on Juniper. Between Ninth and Tenth Avenue.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked the Squires how many hives they have.

Gloria Squires stated three hives.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked the Squires how long they have had their hives.

Gloria Squires stated four years.

City Planner Dave Keeley asked if they have a six foot tall fence and keep water in their backyard.

Gloria Squires stated yes and they could show other bee keepers how to maintain their bee hives.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated that the planning commission members don't have to make a decision tonight. They received a lot of information regarding options.

City Council Bonnie Bradley stated we can't control the ordinance. We can send a letter of complaint, but to take them to court it cost money. If we allow the bees and start getting complaints, how are we going to police them? Will we be willing to take them to court?

Planning Commission Member Yvonne Lawrence asked if they choose to do two or three of the options would the planning members decide what the difference between commercial and hobby.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated planning commission members would decide on the amount of hives and if it would be commercial or a hobby.

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher stated she is going towards option number three.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated if the Planning Commission would like, I could take the Colville ordinance, for example, go through it, make some changes and discuss it at the next meeting.

Chairperson Valerie Hall asked if we all agree on a decision will it have to go to City Council.

City Planner Dave Keeley stated it would have to go through a hearing process, so the public has an opportunity to voice their opinion. City Council will make a yes or no decision.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

As there was no Historic Preservation, Planning Commission moved on to Public Comment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

As there was no Public Comment, Planning Commission moved on to Adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Planning Commission Member Yvonne Lawrence seconded the motion.

Motion carried by all. Planning Commission Member Ray Smith - yes, Planning Commission Member Jesse Christopher - yes, Planning Commission Member Yvonne Lawrence - yes and Adam Huff - yes.

Planning Commission Meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2015 7:00 p.m. at Kettle Falls City Hall.

Approved:

Valerie Hall, Chairperson

Attest:

Mary Schultz, Secretary/Clerk