

July 17, 2023

COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Harold E. Getty Council Chambers

Roll Call

Members present: Mayor Quentin Hart in the Chair. Members present: Mr. Boesen, Mr. Nichols, Ms. Creighton-Smith, and Mr. Grieder. Absent: Mr. Chiles, Ms. Wilder, and Mr. Feuss.

Agenda, as proposed or amended

Grieder/Nichols

that the agenda, as proposed be approved. Voice vote-Ayes: Four. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes.

Grieder/Nichols

that the minutes of the June 20, 2023, Council Work Session, as proposed, be approved. Voice vote-Ayes: Four. Motion carried.

Discussion of dilapidated housing.

Noel Anderson, Community Planning and Development Director provided an overview of Waterloo neighborhoods and factors that contribute to blight. Anderson explained the city's dilapidated housing committee that identifies problem properties based on certain criteria to potentially take through Iowa Code Section 657A. He then provided statistics on the number of properties the city has taken under the statute and either demolished, sold, or rehabilitated.

Mr. Grieder questioned the process to assure property owner rights were upheld.

Noel Anderson explained that property owners are able to keep their property by continuing to maintain their property.

Ms. Creighton-Smith requested timetables for the former St. Mary's School Site, for example, to better illustrate the process it takes to acquire and tear down property.

Mayor Hart explained the hurdles it took to acquire the former St. Mary's School Site and tying the cost to Community Development dollars. Mayor Hart outlined the process, including court proceedings, to obtain 657A properties and feels the city likely leads the state in acquiring and tearing down these properties. Mayor Hart recalls stating, when he started, the city was going to tear down 75-100 percent of the homes on the 657A roster. He found that a Mayor in another community said something similar. That sparked him to question how a home falls into disrepair. As a result, the city partnered with the University of Iowa to study this process and better understand how to prevent this from happening, increase enforcement, and partner with organizations to create taxable value. The city now has a set of recommendations without gentrifying neighborhoods.

Noel Anderson explained the next factor for demolition is cost and reviewed available funds.

Ms. Creighton-Smith questioned why there was such a delay in utilizing Community Development funds.

Rudy Jones, Community Development Director, explained that funds have to be utilized pursuant to activities under the federal plan and move funds to accommodate whatever changes were made to the plan each year.

Ms. Creighton-Smith questioned if the money was then available at a later stage.

Rudy Jones explained changes were made during the year to the plans and projects to utilize the various funds according to federal guidelines.

Mr. Bosen commented that the developer in California bought the home in 2006 and the city has been working to acquire it for thirteen years.

Mayor Hart commented that working with the Virden Creek project benefited all homeowners in that area and once that is down, the city hopes to put in a housing project that would add taxable value.

Ms. Creighton-Smith asked that the city look at having a process where they look first to put a property in the hands of a local person first before going to an out-of-town developer.

Mayor Hart explained that city staff walked through the property to see if it could be rehabilitated. If they can, they go through a bidding process to put the property in the hands of local people but at the same time, hold people accountable for what they do have that is in disrepair. Mayor Hart explained software being brought in called Tulemi which allows staff to see violations, owners and if they have multiple violations for properties throughout the city, which will help with early intervention for these properties.

Noel Anderson explained the elevated housing plan and construction schedule.

Mayor Hart shared an example of partnering with Hawkeye Community College to build three new homes, adding \$470,000 in taxable value to a neighborhood and creating community development. The University of Iowa recommended creating a task force looking at 4-5 other areas for housing development.

Mr. Grieder asked that we have a work session in the future on what programs or city resources we have available to the public on how to maintain their homes.

Noel Anderson shared that the City is seeing housing established in all of the wards from 2019-2023.

Mayor Hart shared that although the city has accomplished a great deal, there is still a lot to be done.

Ms. Creighton-Smith commented that the acquisition of properties needs to be controlled as well by landlords coming into a neighborhood and changing the character of the neighborhood by doing very little to improve the property.

Mayor Hart explained this is being remedied with more inspectors holding landlords

accountable.

ADJOURNMENT

Grieder/Nichols

that the Council adjourns at 4:55 p.m. Voice vote-Ayes: Four. Motion carried.

Kelley Felchle
City Clerk