

MINUTES FROM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
March 26, 2018

Present: Kjell Erlandsson; Fran Martin, Lee Wishau, Marla Wishau, Jim Dobbs, Dave Gobis, Bill Streeter

Absent:

Also Present: Tom Lazano, Howard Stacey, Elaine Ekes

1. Meeting was called to order by Fran Martin at 5:00 p.m. at the Caledonia Village Hall meeting room.
2. Approval of Minutes from February 26, 2018. Motion to approve Lee Wishau; Second by Kjell Erlandsson.
Motion Carried
3. Blighted Property discussion: Elaine and Tom are currently working on options for village blighted property issues. Elaine gathered information which she has made available to us regarding her findings. In summary, there are a variety of ordinances currently on the Village Code of Ordinances books, but they are restrictions in a variety of different places and that makes it difficult for enforcement. As is true in 97% of local municipalities across the county, actions on blighted issues are complaint driven. Once the complaint is reviewed, many times the first step is a letter to the property owner seeking a resolution. If that does not resolve the problem, village staff may meet with the police staff to discuss the problem and have police officer going to the property with a mission of compliance or finding out what the roadblock to compliance might be. The officer could advise the owner that non-compliance is a violation and will result in a citation and further enforcement.

Currently, there is no staff for blighted property processing. If Caledonia continues to be reactive to complaints, the workload of handling blighted properties will vary greatly. With the mission of gaining compliance without going to court, after the initial complaint there would be investigation to see if the issue rises to the blighted property issues as defined in the Village Ordinances. If it did, there would probably be a letter (possibly skeleton form letter, with areas that can be changed for specific issues) sent to the property owner explaining the problem and outlining the resolution that is required by the Village. The letter would also ask the property owner to contact the village staff person with questions or when they have removed/repared the blight defined. There would be follow up required by the Village Staff if the property owner does not get in touch with them. (Perhaps 4 weeks after letter mailed) After this step, there is a lot of time spent on documentation and contact with the property owner and there is involvement with the police department and perhaps the village legal counsel. With this in mind, there would need to be a budget for the legal processes that this might create. This is all policy driven, for example, from a building code perspective, violations might create raze orders (if blight is greater than ½ of the value of the property) served on property owners or lein holders. This leads to wait periods, appeals, litigation and full blown expensive hearings. We can take action if the property owner ignores the village, but that might lead to legal action against the Village. Courts than can issue a judgement and approve razing and payment of any court costs the village incurred, but this is quite a long process. The most important part is the creation of a Property Maintenance Code, so we have the bedrock to stand on from a legal perspective.

We should look at the Mount Pleasant and City of Racine codes. They follow the process of reacting to complaints as well as their own review of blighted areas. They follow the process listed above. If property owners do not voluntarily comply, they issue tickets and use the Building, Code and Police to communicate with property owners. This has been effective in ridding areas of blighted issues. The City of Racine has an online process for reporting property maintenance code violations. We discussed the problem of neighbors being hesitant to make a complaint if they have to put their name on it as it is public record and can be made known to the blighted property owner.

Also discussed was that nonpayment of property tax eventually may leave the property in the hands of the County. Also areas to address would be abandonment, which we believe there are several business properties in this area that prompted CDA to pursue this issue. Members all agreed that the village should not be seen as being “storm troopers” in pursuit of violators; instead the priority should be health and hazard issues.

The steps the CDA can take right now would be to create an Inventory of Problem Properties and a separate Inventory of Vacant Properties. The vacant property list would also assist police to keep an eye on these properties and report/investigate any activity they find suspicious.

Marla Wishau made a motion: **Ask the Legislative and Licensing Committee to create, with the assistance of Tom Lazano and Elaine Ekes, a Property Maintenance Code. It should include all of the current blight issues currently scattered throughout the village ordinances, so they are in one place and easy to find, refer to and enforce. Also, the committee is asked to review the Mount Pleasant and City of Racine's Property Maintenance Code ordinance and use it as a guide, and include any additional guidelines and clarification as to assist in the determination of blight and the enforcement thereof. We request a draft ordinance be sent to the CDA committee for the June Meeting.** Seconded by Lee Wishau, Motion Carried. (Jim Dobbs thought the date would be reasonable as Tom and Elaine are already working on this ordinance.)

4. Western Publishing – not closed but Accepted Offer. Meeting with the architects and consultants are behind schedule because no existing drawings or schematics to see how changes might affect the structure. We are waiting for future information and communications.
5. I-94 Study – skip
6. 2050 Plan – The road portion of the 2050 plan is complete, but the land use plan element is not complete and this is what we want to reconcile. There are 10 elements to the land use plan, and each portion has to be approved and adopted by the village board. Lee will contact SEWRPC and find out more. 616003 Statute is multijurisdictional and Elaine would help if needed for hearings / public input / etc.
7. Rezoning study – General rezoning is underway revising the county code. The goal is to integrate new codes and get rid of obsolete portions and will take several years to complete.
8. No new business
9. Meeting adjourned 6:10 p.m. Motion made by Marla Wishau, Seconded by Fran Martin. Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted by Marla Wishau