

Committee-of-the-Whole
May 26, 2015
Municipal Center

- Call to Order The Champlin City Council met in a Committee-of-the-Whole (COW) meeting and was called to order by Mayor ArMand Nelson at 6:30 p.m.
- Roll Call Present were Mayor ArMand Nelson and Councilmembers Ryan Karasek, Bruce Miller, Eric Johnson and Kara Terry (Arrived at 6:33 p.m.).
- Absent: none.
- Also present were City Administrator Bret Heitkamp, Community Development Director John Cox, Code Enforcement Officer Diana Jones, Police Chief Dave Kolb, City Attorney Scott Lepak and City Clerk Roberta Colotti.
- Approval of Agenda
(May 26, 2015)
Motion Motion by Councilmember Johnson and seconded by Councilmember Karasek to approve the agenda for the May 26, 2015 COW Meeting as presented. Voting in favor were Mayor Nelson, Councilmembers Karasek, Miller, Johnson and Terry. Voting against: none. Motion carried.
- Code Enforcement 2014
Annual Report The Community Development Director provided an overview of the Code Enforcement program. He reported that in 2014, the City investigated 2,107 code complaints. Owners of non-compliant properties were notified by letter of the offenses(s), and corrective action was required by a specific date. Parties not complying were issued a citation. Last year, the City issued 70 citations. Citations do not require action beyond a court appearance and a possible fine. More severe or habitual offenders are issued a formal complaint which requires a court appearance and hearing to resolve the outstanding complaint. Last year, the City filed two formal complaints seeking resolution through District Court.
- The Code Enforcement Officer reviewed the City's Rental Housing Licensing program. She reported that the program was started in 2007. In 2014, the City licensed 1,121 rental units. The program requires landlords obtain a rental license that requires their property be inspected. The inspections insure rental housing is safe, sanitary and properly maintained.
- The Code Enforcement Officer reviewed the City's Foreclosure Response Plan. This plan was adopted in 2007 to address issues with foreclosures and abandoned homes. The plan's three step approach calls for (1) promoting local, free, foreclosure counseling services, (2) identifying foreclosed properties and; (3) acting to address the property's needs.
- The Community Development Director stated that tall grasses and noxious weeds are regulated by Chapter 34 (Nuisance) and Chapter 62 (Vegetation) of the City Code. The City's lead enforcement agent is the Deputy Tree and Weed Inspector who is a contracted employee. In 2014 the City conducted 639 weed and tree inspections, issued 207 correction letters and ultimately abated 15 properties. The Community Development Director stated there are certain nuisance violations such as the fire damaged building that needed to be razed that are handled by the Community Development Department.
- Councilmember Terry asked if the City's Rental Housing Licensing program was based on State law or if it was a City initiative.
- The City Attorney stated that the Rental Housing Licensing program was designed using established programs from other cities and was authorized based on the City's general authority to protect the public health, welfare and safety.
- Councilmember Miller requested staff provide an overview the code complaint process for the viewing public.
- The Code Enforcement Officer stated that to report a code violation contact her by phone or e-mail.

There is also a code violation complaint form on the City's website. She advised that 911 should not be used to file a code complaint. She noted that when a complaint is received, an acknowledgement of the complaint is given to the complainant. After that the City works directly with the subject of the complaint to resolve the issue.

Councilmember Miller stated that he appreciated the report and the work of the Code Enforcement Division.

Councilmember Karasek questioned the process for working with a property owner that is new to the rental process.

The Code Enforcement Officer stated that a packet of information is sent to new landlords and those interested in renting their property. She stated that staff works closely with new landlords in processing their rental licenses.

Councilmember Johnson requested that staff outline the "3-strikes" that can result in a tenant being evicted.

The Code Enforcement Officer stated that when police calls and issues arise at a property they work with the landlord to make sure that the terms of the lease and any outside funding agency rules are followed. She outlined the timeline and notice process associated with a "3-strikes" eviction.

Mayor Nelson asked if City Code required homeowners to have grass.

The Code Enforcement Officer stated that she would research that question and report back to the Council.

Mayor Nelson asked when illegal signs are picked up throughout the week.

The Code Enforcement Officer stated that work is completed by office staff vs. Police Officers so it is done during business hours.

Mayor Nelson stated that the report shows the number of rental housing units is increasing. He asked if staff anticipates this number decreasing in the future as the economy improves.

The Code Enforcement Officer stated that while not a real-estate expert, she has recently seen the homes in Champlin that have been for sale, selling quickly. She has also seen rental homes being sold to the tenants, which she saw as a good sign as the renters were committing to Champlin through homeownership. However, she has also seen investors buying homes for sale in Champlin that are in need of repair, fixing them and then establishing them as new rental units.

Mayor Nelson thanked the Community Development Department for the report.

Adjournment

The Champlin City Council adjourned the regular meeting at 6:53 p.m.

ArMand Nelson, Mayor

Attest:

Roberta Colotti, CMC, City Clerk