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Press Release

City Commission recommends change to Planning Commission

Suggested amendment to subdivision regulations allows self-storage doors

ARKANSAS CITY, Kan. (January 6, 2016) — The City Commission of Arkansas City voted 5-0 on Tuesday night to request that the Arkansas City Planning Commission consider an amendment to the City's subdivision regulations during the City Commission's first regular meeting of the year at City Hall.

The proposed change to Subdivision Regulations Article 13 would lessen existing restrictions on doorways in mini-warehouse facilities, also known as self-storage units.

"No door openings for any mini-warehouse storage unit shall be constructed facing any residentially zoned property or public right-of-way," the current language states.

The City Commission struggled with this requirement when considering a conditional-use permit for just such a storage unit at 1125 W. Skyline Road during its meeting on Dec. 1, 2015.

Testimony from the property owners indicated it would present a hardship for them, and Mayor Chad Giles was critical of the public right-of-way portion because of a possible impact on public safety.

The commissioners sent the permit back to the Planning Commission with a request to consider amending that requirement or deleting it entirely, but after extensive discussion on Dec. 8, that board declined to include an amendment as part of other revisions to the zoning and subdivision regulations.

The Planning Commission's sentiment at the time was that rather than continue to make exceptions for this single piece of property, its members preferred that the City Commission issue some direction.

In response, the City Commission instructed City Attorney Tamara Niles to draft proposed new language to fix the issue. Her alteration allows screening to obstruct the doors from external view.

"The buildings shall be architecturally compatible with the existing neighborhood," the City Commission's motion states. "To that end, newly constructed mini-warehouse storage units either shall

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- (a) install a screen to shield door openings from residentially zoned property and public right-of-way, or
- (b) face door openings away from any residentially zoned property or public right-of-way.”

The Planning Commission will have a public hearing on the proposed change at its next meeting at 5:30 p.m. Feb. 9 in the commission room at City Hall, according to City Planner Josh White.

In other business Tuesday, the City Commission:

- Heard a presentation from South Central Kansas Medical Center director of quality performance and risk management Jane Campbell regarding SCKMC’s hospital-acquired infection report.
- Heard from citizen Michelle Dykes regarding limits to the neighborhood services superintendent’s powers to enter abandoned structures and determine if they are dangerous.
- Heard a request from Randy Ryel, owner of the Steamy Joe coffee shop, that the City consider replacing his meter and water main in order to improve flow to a residential fire-sprinkler system he is installing on the second floor of his business at 216 W. Central Ave. City Manager Nick Hernandez and Public Works Director Eric Broce indicated they would try to accommodate him.
- Voted unanimously to approve the following consent agenda items: the Dec. 15 regular meeting minutes as written; and a resolution authorizing Hernandez, Finance Director Kathy Cornwell and City Treasurer Jennifer Waggoner to act as authorized signers on City bank accounts.
- Heard a first reading of and voted unanimously to approve an ordinance modifying Municipal Code Section 18-27, regarding private security officers. Niles said the City needed to remove a prohibition on security officers’ carrying firearms in response to a new State of Kansas law.
- Heard a first reading of an ordinance amending several articles in the City’s zoning and subdivision regulations, mostly concerning sign regulations and the site plan review process. After a lengthy presentation by White and some discussion, the commissioners decided to table the ordinance until a second reading at their Jan. 19 meeting.
- Heard from citizen Ken Harader regarding illegal parking on North First Street and his contention that Family Dollar had installed an additional lighted sign, in violation of a variance granted Oct. 12, 2015, by the Board of Zoning Appeals. White said staff would check the board’s minutes regarding the latter item, although they were not yet certified because the board has not met since then, while Giles told Harader to report future parking violations to the police.

- Heard updates from Hernandez on a proposed purchasing policy and procedures manual, which several commissioners asked to be included on the Jan. 19 agenda as new business, and the progress of construction of a new clearwell on West Madison Avenue, which will be delayed until at least sometime in February due to the cold temperatures.