

Neighborhood Council #1
Meeting Minutes
DATE March 11th, 2014

Members Present: Neal Dubois, Dennis Mora, Bill Thomas, Mike Flaherty, Lynda Sowell

Absent: none

Others Present: Weylon Thompson, Laurie Price, Sheila Rice, Erck family, Dustin Williams, Ed Venetz, Mark Macek, Jana Cooper, Brett Doney

Call to Order: Call to order by Lynda Sowell, 7:00p.m.

Committee Reports: Council of Council Meeting - Councilman Neal DuBois presented information from the council of councils meeting. Participation in the neighborhood improvement survey had little involvement from city residents. Only 160 surveys were completed county wide. The result of such poor participation means that there is little information for the city development authority to use. The council also addressed the issue of the impending sign compliance ordinance and how it will impact local businesses. The City Council may re-examine the issue and its “abrupt implementation” as there is a perception among some business owners that the ordinance is aimed at casinos and the cost to bring businesses into compliance may be prohibitive.

Old Business: Council bylaws need to be corrected. Grammatical corrections along with a number of stylistic changes need to be implemented. Additionally, any appendixes and attachments that are mentioned in the bylaws need to be added, or if appropriate, removed.

New Business: Sheila Rice, Executive Director of Neighborworks, spoke extensively about the Neighborworks program and the various projects that Neighborworks supports. Particular programs mentioned were the leadership project, and the high school house. Neighborworks is also asking for volunteers from each neighborhood council and their corresponding neighborhoods for the annual Maypril cleanup and Neighborhood Watch programs.

Lori Price, representing the Erck Family Hotels, opened the discussion about the planned addition of a convention center onto the North Side of the existing Hilton Garden Inn. Phase 2 and 3 are currently under consideration and awaiting a proposed rezoning of a piece of property west of the Hilton Garden Inn. The proposed change is from an R5 multi-family medium density zone designation to a C2 general commercial. The planned addition will bring a 22,000 sq. ft. (approx.) convention center along with an additional 101 rooms in the Home 2 Suites extended stay hotel. The new hotel will be four stories tall, approximately 55 ft. tall as will the purposed convention center. The entire project has been identified as a Leed Gold Project, whose mission statement is as follows; “The USGBC Montana Chapter promotes

balanced social, economic, and environmental stewardship in Montana by leading and educating about green building practices that will create healthy and sustainable communities in which to live, work, and play.” (United States Green Building Council; <http://www.usgbcmontana.org/mission.html>). General concerns from residents of the neighborhood that were present for the meeting included several issues. Light pollution from the purposed new parking lot into the houses that border the property, as well as water run-off. There will be a 3’ landscaped berm between the purposed south parking lot and the alley that separates the houses. Additionally, trees will be planted every four parking spaces to help alleviate some of the light pollution. Water run-off will be addressed with a storm pond that is designed to accommodate a one-in-a-hundred-year storm. The additional development will also use the existing storm system built during phase I of the development. Local contractors will be used as much as possible in the development of the project. Residents asked several questions; Q: Is the purchase of the parking lot west of the Hilton Garden already done? A: Pete Bleskin, current owner of the property is in agreement to sell based on rezoning. Q: Is the development of the convention center and the Home 2 Suites contingent upon the rezoning of the property and the additional parking A: No, there is already enough parking per city code but they would like more. Q: Is there a 20’ limit on the size of the light poles and would the Erck’s consider using directional LED technology not only in the new lights but in the existing lights already in place? A: They would consider it. Q: Will there be a sprinkler system to ensure that the landscaping on the berm does not become barren and dead during the summer? A: LEED projects require that environmental considerations be first consideration, although there will be some sort of irrigation system. Q: Is there a date that the hotel would like to present to the planning board? A: yes, April 22nd. Q: Can there also be a berm built on the west side of the development as well to protect the two residential houses from light pollution? A: Yes Q: Can there be bushes on top of the berm as well? A: The City is concerned about visibility into the alley, although not against code, safety should be the first consideration. Q: Can homeowners get a variance for fence height to help with noise and light pollution? A: Yes, but it would be on the homeowners own initiative. As a general comment tax revenue from the project is expected to be substantial.

Lori closed the presentation by asking that Neighborhood Council #1 vote to recommend the project to the City Planning Commission. Councilwoman Lynda Sowell voiced her concern that as the subject was added to the agenda only days before, residents of the neighborhood may not have been adequately apprised of the meeting. Councilman Mike Flaherty motioned to table the vote until next scheduled meeting, April 8th, Councilman Neal DuBois seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. Voting on the recommendation during the next meeting will still allow enough time for the Erck’s to present at the April 22nd planning meeting.

Other Business: None

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made at 8:00 p.m. by Lynda Sowell seconded by Mike Flaherty
Approved unanimously. Next meeting April 8th, 2014.