

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Tuesday, May 5, 2020 – 6:15 p.m.

Council Chambers – Olean Municipal Building

Present: Members: Chairman Crawford, Vice Chairman Dougherty, Alderman Witte, Alderman Gonzalez, and Alderman DaPolito. Others: Alderman Panus; Alderman Anastasia; Mayor William Aiello; Fred Saradin, City Auditor; Bob Ring, Director of Public Works; Tim Richardson, Fire Chief; Jeff Rowley, Police Chief, and Tiffany Taylor, Managerial Confidential Administrative Secretary.

1. Roll Call

Alderman Crawford called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. and asked that the record show that all committee members were present.

2. Approval of Minutes of the Previous Committee Meetings (Tuesday, February 4, 2020)

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2020 meeting was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried.

3. Unfinished Business

None

4. New Referrals for Consideration

a. Discussion – Tiny Houses

Alderman Crawford explained that he completely recognizes the current health crisis, but there will be life after COVID. He explained that part of strategic planning is looking towards the future for opportunities for the City. He explained that he is bringing this forward because he had some residents approach him to see if tiny houses were allowed in the City. He explained that he knew about the TV show about tiny houses, but he didn't know much more about them.

Alderman Crawford explained that he started doing some research, and he thought that he could at least get the gears going to start a conversation with the City and Council. He explained that tiny homes are now going to be included in the New York State Building Code coming out later this month as appendix Q. He explained that there is a changing demand for homes and structures, and there are a lot of blighted homes in the City and not many new builds. He explained that it is expensive to build a large, new home and he wanted to give information and welcome feedback from Council members as he continues to do homework on tiny homes.

Alderman Crawford explained that as a brief concept, a tiny home is one that is between 100 and 400 square feet. He explained that there are two types of tiny houses, one of which is mobile and on wheels, which is legally considered an RV. He explained that for the purpose of the building code, he is referring to one on a foundation that is not mobile. HE explained that right now they are prohibited to build, and according to City Code, would need to be built on a lot as a secondary dwelling. This would include building the tiny home on your existing lot with your existing home, for example, for elderly parents.

Alderman Crawford explained that as a large group of our population is getting older, and a lot of elderly individuals in other cities may be ahead of the times and realize that this is a new demand. He explained that they may not want to go into an assisted living facility, but they may want to downsize and they are finding that current smaller houses are not to their liking. He explained that aa lot of elderly people are transitioning to tiny homes as a way to maintain their independence, and younger people are moving into tiny homes as a way to transition from a rental base to their first starter home.

Alderman Crawford explained that tiny homes can cost anywhere between \$10,000 and \$50,000. He explained that there are some very nice ones, and some in which people want to live a minimalist lifestyle. He explained that everything is on one floor.

Alderman Crawford explained that as New York is considering tiny houses, it might behoove the Council to look into this to match our codes. He explained that he is not necessarily saying to allow these in an R1 or R2, but perhaps an R3. He explained that some communities are specifying one place where these types of homes can be built. He explained that it would possibly take a lot to sync our current codes to allow for this to happen, but in the current code, a lot of variances would be required to allow a tiny home. He suggested that the Council work with Code Enforcement and the Fire Department to see if Olean should consider allowing tiny homes.

Alderman Crawford explained that he sent questions to Ed Jennings and had received feedback, which he forwarded to the Council. He explained that the current minimum width of a dwelling is 24 feet, and tiny homes are currently not allowed without a variance. He explained that the new New York State Building Code is effective May 12th, and although tiny homes are listed in appendix Q, the City would have to make changes to our existing codes to allow tiny houses in Olean.

Alderman Crawford explained that there are obviously a lot of questions, and this is probably something that will be a major overhaul. He explained that those he spoke with in the community are overwhelmingly supportive of the concept. He explained that the City needs more people to live here and stay here. He explained that his parents have been looking for a

home to downsize to, but they really have not been finding anything. He explained that an opportunity like this could help them downsize a little more economically.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he understands that there is overwhelming support, but he questions if there is actually a demand. He explained that he is trying to be very positive, but his concern is that this would have to be super controlled. He is trying to consider this from the most negative point of view, and he believes that some of the famous slum landlords will buy empty lots, construct six or seven tiny houses and rent them out. Alderman Dougherty compared this to a trailer park, and Alderman Gonzalez responded that's exactly what he is talking about.

Alderman Panus explained that he feels that this is a good idea and he thinks that demand would call for tiny homes. He explained that his home is almost tiny at only about 600 square feet.

Alderman DaPolito explained that in his personal experience, Olean's housing stock does not really contain smaller one story houses for the elderly looking to downsize. He explained that he looked at smaller homes and there were none. He explained that we are going to have to ensure that the code does not allow this to create "trailer parks" throughout the City. He noted that he owns the empty lot adjacent to his home, and it would be perfect for a tiny house.

Alderman Crawford explained that we all know the work that went into revising Chapter 12 of the code, and he understands that this will take code change and regulation. He explained that we all know what happened with Forest Hills, and he still believes that people in Olean would benefit from this sort of concept. He explained that his parents can't live in a two story home and want to downsize, but there's nothing that is move in ready. He explained that it does not hurt to put work into creating and updating the codes to give people the opportunity to build homes such as these. He explained that we should be proactive, not reactive. We are a progressive thinking community.

Alderman DaPolito explained that all of the houses that we are taking down creates empty lots. Alderman Dougherty explained that the building codes do not allow for the setbacks where these homes were built, and unless an adjoining property owner purchases the lot to build an addition or garage, the lot will remain empty. He explained that tiny homes were discussed in the Code Enforcement classes that he attended, but he did not expect New York State to pass the legislation needed to allow tiny homes. He explained that he sees these as a good thing.

Alderman Witte asked Chief Richardson what he thinks, and Chief Richardson responded that we will have to see what appendix Q says and see what would have to happen for zoning. He explained that we would need to ensure that we are not significantly altering the characteristics

of a neighborhood. He explained that he would think that this is something that we need to look into.

Alderman Witte suggested looking at what other municipalities are doing, and Chief Rowley responded that we will not be able to do this because it is new for all of New York State.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he thinks that we really need to consider neighborhood characteristics. He feels that we are opening ourselves up and we will see a lot of pushback from neighborhoods.

Alderman Panus explained that he thinks that we need to figure out if this fits in our City and if it does, where it should be. He explained that he worked as an urban planner out of college. He explained that we need to look at the New York State codes as well as ours, and have a feasibility study done. He explained that in bigger cities, they're cheaper so there will be benefits. He is concerned that these could become blight in our area. He explained that we need to find someone who is a professional to give us advice. He is not sure that these are what are best for our neighborhoods.

Alderman Crawford explained that we just tore down the meth house on Washington Street, and that house wasn't doing anything for the community. He explained that he would welcome a small, consolidated \$30,000 house rather than have that there, He explained that blight is lining every street, He agrees that these don't fit everywhere, for example, in the historic district. He feels, however, that they would be welcome in other areas of the City. He explained that our goal is to increase the population and users. He explained that he wants constructive feedback, and asked that the committee email him pros and cons.

Alderman Witte explained that if you have ever watched the show, it consists of a lot of young couples that are just starting out, or people who want out of a big house.

Alderman Crawford explained that a single person who has been renting in the City could own their own home for \$30,000. Alderman Gonzalez responded that they could also get a mortgage like everyone else. He explained that we have too much housing stock in the City. Alderman Panus explained that this may reduce the number of people who are renting from slumlords.

Alderman Gonzalez explained that he understands what they are saying, but he feels that it is a slippery slope, He explained that this looks great on the show, but that's 25 people who built tiny homes and there are 300 million people in the county. He explained that he feels that this will open up more issues, and this will open the City up to trailers on lots and full blown trailer parks. He explained that you have to think about 15-20 years down the road when tiny homes

aren't the fad anymore, and we will be stuck with a bunch of vacant, possibly blighted tiny homes.

Alderman Anastasia explained that he has no idea what appendix q says, but he feels that we should consider it if it is going to bring people to Olean. Alderman Gonzalez explained that if it's going to bring young professional yuppy types that want to live in tiny homes great, but wake him up in 2030 when no one wants them.

Alderman Dougherty explained that he's never been a big fan of zoning and the "Leave it to Beaver" cookie cutter neighborhoods. HE explained that he feels that different types of structures create character in a neighborhood. He explained that things are changing, and he is anxious to see appendix Q.

5. Approval of Committee Reports

None

6. Executive Session

A motion to enter into executive session to discuss the potential acquisition or sale of real estate was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Gonzalez. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session began at approximately 6:35 p.m.

A motion to adjourn from executive session was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman Witte. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Executive session adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.

7. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Alderman Crawford, seconded by Alderman DaPolito. Voice vote, ayes all. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 6:45 p.m.