

FEBRUARY 19, 2008

The City Council and the Land Use Commission of the City of Sulphur, Louisiana, met in special session at its regular meeting place at City Hall, Sulphur, Louisiana, on February 19, 2008 at 4:00 p.m., after full compliance with the convening of said meeting with the following members present:

DRU ELLENDER, Council Representative of District 1  
Arrived at 4:07 p.m.

MIKE KOONCE, Council Representative of District 2  
Arrived at 4:47 p.m.

CHRIS DUNCAN, Council Representative of District 3

NANCY TOWER, Council Representative of District 4

STUART MOSS, Council Representative of District 5

JAY SHELTON, Land Use Commission of District 1  
Arrived at 4:07 p.m.

TROY DARBY, Land Use Commission of District 2

LAWRENCE DAVID, Land Use Commission of District 4

GERRIT LAWRENCE, Land Use Commission of District 5

RESIGNED, JOHNNY BERGERON, Land Use Commission of District 3

After the meeting was called to order and the roll called with the above result, prayer was led by Mr. Darby followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mr. David.

The only item on the agenda a discussion concerning needs, changes and analysis of Land Use requirements. Mrs. Tower, chairman of the City Council, stated that this will be a round table discussion and she will be acting as facilitator of the meeting. She first asked if anyone had immediate amendments to the land use ordinance that they would like to address. The members responded as follows:

- Mr. Lawrence stated that he would like to see a comprehensive plan in place rather than hiring a specialist to review our current land use ordinance.
- Mr. Duncan stated that with the comprehensive plan we need a city planner.
- Mrs. Tower stated that we need to know the correct steps to take for truck stops to have public hearings so the public will be notified.

Mrs. Ellender stated that whatever changes are being proposed does not need to happen quickly. They need to take their time and make sure they are doing the right thing.

Mr. Moss stated that he would like to see all commercial permits before being issued and have a “no question” period so the Council could review them (i.e. 14 days). Mrs. Ellender stated that this is not economic development. If the property is zoned correct then why shouldn't the permit get issued? Do we not give a permit if we don't want a certain type of business to come into the city even though it is zoned correct? Mrs. Tower stated that this 14 day period would only be for review purposes and to look at the ones that are of concern. Lake Charles has a list of concerns in their ordinance, such as, liquor license, gaming, etc. If one of these businesses raise a concern then at that time that business will have a public hearing. Mr. Lawrence stated that this will be a “stop gap” until the ordinance is amended. Mrs. Tower asked that this issue be placed on the March zoning agenda.

At this time Mrs. Tower asked if anyone had concerns on the updated land use ordinance. Mr. Lawrence stated that he distributed changes that he would like to see made to the ordinance. Some of his changes were already made. Now everyone needs to review what he distributed to make sure the other changes are reviewed also. He asked that this be done by the March City Council meeting.

Mr. Darby stated that the only “meat” they have in Mr. Lawrence’s proposed changes is anything that they change from residential to anything less restrictive but this still doesn’t protect all the commercial property that is out there. The next goal would be to take these steps and implement them into the commercial properties. This will have to be done as a team.

Mr. Moss stated that the Council needs to get with their Commissioner and look at the zoning map and go street by street to see what needs to be rezoned. Mr. Darby stated that in his district and Mrs. Ellender’s district they have areas that need to be changed from Mixed Residential to Residential. At this time everyone decided that within 30 days they should review their zoning map and see how their district is zoned and also make note of any proposed zoning changes and then come back 30 days later with another one of these joint meetings.

Mrs. Tower stated that we have an updated ordinance that addresses what the Land Commission needs but we still lack the expertise to do a lot of the things we’ve had problems with over the past couple of years (i.e. detailed definitions and clarifications on lots). Mr. Lawrence stated that he would like to take each district, residential, mixed, business, etc. one by one and make changes. He would like to start with the business and commercial districts first.

Mr. Duncan’s concern is if they want to rezone a piece of property will they have to get the owner to fill out the rezone application and go through the whole rezone process. He also stated that the owner may be very upset if the city rezones their property. Mr. Darby stated that they have to come up with a plan first, then sell that plan to the property owner. We have to make them understand that their property value will not go

down by doing this. The property owner is probably more concerned with property value rather than how their property is classified. They have to understand we are trying to protect their property.

Mr. Darby stated that he was also concerned about overlay. When a business wants to locate on the major thoroughfare they should be prepared to have a great looking facade.

Mrs. Tower then asked the members what does the new comprehensive ordinance need to entail?

- Mr. David stated that we need to address signage setbacks.
- Mrs. Tower stated we need more definitions.
- Mr. Moss stated that gaming districts need to be clearly marked.
- Mr. Duncan stated that the inspection department needs to be included when we make all these changes.
- Mr. Lawrence stated that he would like to enact “tiering”.
- Mr. Darby stated that the changes need to be acted on immediately.
- Mrs. Tower stated that she would like to incorporate the subdivision and mobile home parks ordinance into the land use ordinance.
- Mr. Darby suggested that a specialist be hired who will look at our current land use ordinance.
- Mr. Lawrence would like the ordinance to be written in layman’s terms.

At this time all the members agreed that the land use ordinance needed a complete review by a specialist. Mr. Bruce stated that the ordinance definitely needs clarity. He contacted Tim Jackson and is trying to get a scope of what exactly he would do. At this point there is no commitment to Mr. Jackson. Right now we are trying to define exactly what we want. Listed below are the concerns of Mr. Jackson:

- Define Sulphur, who are we.
- Look at the overall code of ordinances and the land use ordinance.
- Get a list of existing issues that the city has been dealing with.
- Review all minutes (i.e. variances, rezones)
- Review overall document for amendments or for a total rewrite.

Mr. Bruce also stated that we are in the very early stages of this and if Mr. Jackson doesn't do a total rewrite he estimates the cost would be under \$10,000.

Mrs. Tower stated that we probably need to define the scope a little better and see if Mr. Vilavaso would provide us with a cost analysis also.

Mrs. Tower asked that the administration seek proposals and have them available for the Land Use March meeting and the City Council could approve funding at their April meeting. She then stated that training needed to be included in that scope for the cost analysis. Once this ordinance is finalized everyone needs to be trained because everyone needs to completely understand it.

Mr. David stated that he would like to see more continuing education. The mandatory 4-hour class that each member has to attend isn't enough. The inspectors should also be included in these classes.

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mrs. Tower declared the meeting adjourned.

ATTEST:

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ARLENE BLANCHARD, Clerk

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NANCY TOWER, Chairman

2/19/08  
4:50 P.M.