

City of Decorah Council Work Session Monday, January 25, 2021 – 5:15pm

Electronic meeting pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.8 – In circumstances where such a meeting is impossible or impractical due to concerns about COVID-19 and social distancing for the safety of Council members and the public.

In support of Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds' proclamation declaring a State of Public Health Disaster Emergency in Iowa, the current COVID-19 situation makes it "impossible and impractical" to meet in one location. Due to this the Decorah City Hall was open to the public for the January 25, 2021 City Council work session meeting. However, seating was limited to ensure proper social distancing. Seating was available on a first-come, first served basis. However, the meeting was made available telephonically.

The City of Decorah Council Work Session was held on Monday, January 25, 2021 at 5:15pm.

The City Council met in a work session on Monday, January 25, 2021 at 5:15pm. Mayor Lorraine Borowski called the meeting to order and the following answered roll: Randy Schissel, Emily Neal, Steve Luse, Ross Hadley, Steve Zittergruen, and Kirk Johnson.

Absent: Andy Carlson.

Others in attendance: City Manager Chad Bird and several department heads.
There were 5 people on Zoom.

Agenda

Discussion regarding Dahlen rezoning application

Mayor Borowski asked Bird to open the meeting by giving an overview of the rezoning application received from the Dahlens for property situated along Old Stage Road.

Bird also reviewed the right-of-first-refusal document and the conditional rezoning agreement in addition to the mapping of the rezoning area and the floodplain areas.

Neal asked about other options for protective measures for flood control. She discussed asking the Dahlens to install protective measures as a condition of the sale of the land.

Anderson reviewed the agreements and pointed out the Board of Adjustment needs to consider placing fill in the floodplain and that decision will drive some of the conservation practices conversation.

Neal expressed concern about why the city would consider buying this land and what might happen if it did? How would the city be able to protect the land any better?

Zittergruen asked if the potential commercial buyer could mitigate or buy other land to off-set impacts of development.

Hadley also said the site plan approval process with the final developer will require best storm water practices for onsite and flood mitigation efforts.

In general, the council struggled with how to fund any possible / future purposes and what to do to develop mitigation strategies. Where would the funding come from to buy the land. Bird stated the agreement allows for the purchase of any or all of the land so it could be purchased in smaller increments.

The council asked why the current owners couldn't plant buffer strips along the river.

Johnson expressed interest in that all the land should be set aside for conservancy or preserve and protected.

There was a question about the amount of land that it would take to balance or counter any possible development. Bird noted he is working with the Iowa Flood Center on that question.

There was also general discussion on how to stagger purchases in smaller lot sizes and how often.

The council concluded the discussion on this topic by asking for staff research on the calculations to mitigate the fill rate and ratio, what practices would be necessary to balance the effects of the commercial development.

They also expressed interested in some type of cost share for the best practices which may be implemented.

Bird said he would work to develop some responses and he reminded the council the public hearing is set for Monday, February 15, 2021.

Discussion regarding City's special assessment policy – 2021 East Main Street Improvement Project

There was general discussion regarding the city's special assessment policies and implementation over the years.

There was general consensus about not implementing an assessment on the East Main Street project. There was interest in continuing the practices of assessing alleys.

The council did want to see some figures on the costs associated with East Main and asked for continued discussion.

There was no other business and the meeting adjourned at 7:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Council Work Session Meetings

Special work sessions are scheduled for the fourth Monday of each month at a time agreeable by council or set by the Mayor. The purpose of the work session is to review upcoming action items, to plan and conduct research, or review items for possible action. A special work session may be called by the Mayor or upon petition of three members of the council and shall require notice in compliance with Iowa law; a verbal / written notification shall be given by the Mayor to each Council member. Only matters placed on the agenda for the work session meeting shall be discussed.