

**Minutes of Meeting  
Belton Planning Commission  
City Hall Annex, 520 Main Street  
February 4, 2013**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Holly Girgin called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**ATTENDANCE**

Commission: Chairman Girgin, Mayor Pro Tem Gary Lathrop, Councilman Scott Von Behren, Commissioners Sally Davila, Tim McDonough, Jeff Fletcher, and Chris Christensen.

Staff: Jay Leipzig, Community Development Director; Robert Cooper, City Planner; Ted Lange, Building and Grounds Manager; and Ann Keeton, Community Development Secretary.

Absent: Commissioner Larry Thompson

**MINUTES**

Commissioner Davila moved to approve the minutes of the December 17, 2012, Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Lathrop. All members present voted in favor, and the motion carried.

**PUBLIC HEARING - Amend UDC - Tree Topping**

It was reported by Mr. Leipzig that a text amendment to the Unified Development Code (UDC) regarding tree topping was first introduced during the December 17, 2012, Commission meeting. Mr. Cooper presented background information on how the City achieved the status of "Tree City USA." He went over questions raised by the Commission during the December meeting and the answers that were provided by the City Tree Board. Points brought out included: 1) Enforcement will be through the normal Code Enforcement process; 2) Permits will not be required; 3) Ordinance applies to public trees only with the Tree Board to provide education and determine exemptions.

Chairman Girgin opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m. The hearing was held to receive public input regarding a text amendment to the UDC regarding Maintenance of Landscaping / Tree Topping. There was no public input and Chairman Girgin closed the public hearing at 7:08 p.m.

Mayor Pro Tem Lathrop initiated a discussion about the tree topping enforcement and exemption processes. The Commission talked over tree topping details including tree trimming by utility companies. Mr. Leipzig offered to revise the proposed language to further clarify the exemption approval process. He stated the Ordinance language being proposed is standard language that has been adopted by other Tree City communities. There was further discussion about property owners maintaining public trees, and examples of situations when trees must be topped due to overhead utility lines were provided. Mr. Leipzig suggested the tree board develop

parameters for acceptable exemptions. Councilman Von Behren moved to recommend approval of a text amendment to Section 22-18(a-b) of the Unified Development Code (UDC) to include a tree topping ordinance that will be modified to clarify that the provisions will be governed by the Codes Department with special circumstances being referred to the Tree Board. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McDonough. When a vote was taken, the following was recorded: Ayes: 7 - Chairman Girgin, Mayor Pro Tem Lathrop, Councilman Von Behren, Commissioners Davila, McDonough, Fletcher, and Christensen. Noes: none. Absent: Commissioner Thompson. The motion carried.

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2012 Review - Mr. Leipzig presented an overview of key cases and discussion items reviewed by the Commission in 2012. In addition, he went over a list of proposed issues and projects that may be considered by the Commission in 2013 which included possible financial incentives to encourage larger single-family homes, and a review of certain aspects of the sign ordinance.

Boardwalk at Belton - Mr. Leipzig gave a status report on the proposed Boardwalk at Belton development. He stated the developer is trying to move forward with the project, and is meeting with staff next week.

Digital signs - There was a discussion about the code requirements for digital message board signs. Signs that may not be in compliance with the code were identified. Mr. Cooper indicated he will inspect the digital signs and contact the business owners by letter to advise them of the sign code requirements.

Permit Fees - A memo with an overview of building permit fees was distributed by Mr. Leipzig. He explained that some area communities have established a temporary reduction in permit fees to encourage development, with mixed results. He summarized certain data contained in the memo. He indicated it would be advantageous to study the data to determine how to create neighborhoods with larger single-family homes in Belton. Historically, the City has been primarily a community of starter homes according to Mr. Leipzig. He proposed researching strategies to attract quality large home developments and suggested scheduling a round-table meeting with a diverse group of participants. Mr. Leipzig reviewed a fee comparison table with the Commission. He pointed out that Belton has one of the fastest plan review times shown in the comparison table. Commissioner Fletcher complimented the City building inspectors on being helpful to citizens during building projects. Mr. Leipzig explained that he acts as the primary contact for plan review comments associated with development projects, and he explained the building official calculates the permit fees.

C.D. Donovan, 301 Berry, Belton, requested permission to speak to the Commission. Mr. **Donovan's** stated opinion was that until the value of existing homes goes up, builders will not be attracted to build new homes.

Open House - Mr. Leipzig reported the annual Contractors / Developers Open House is scheduled for March 21, 2013. He provided an outline of the open house program.

Code Enforcement Advisory Committee - This committee has been reviewing Code Enforcement policies and procedures. In consideration of undeveloped land, the committee looked at existing language which may be amended to allow vegetation to exceed 8-inches but no more than 12-inches.

Downtown Belton Main Street - It was reported by Mr. Leipzig that the Downtown Belton Main Street group is investigating grants to fund Wi-Fi for the downtown Main Street area.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Lathrop moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Von Behren. All members present voted in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Ann Keeton  
Community Development Secretary