

**Minutes of Meeting
Code Enforcement Advisory Committee
City Hall Annex, 520 Main Street
Thursday, January 18, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

Demetrius Ramirez called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Councilmember Rob Powell, Dennis Hull, Dawn Thomas, Wanda Thompson, Rosemary Howard, Keith Richardson, Steve Hackett, Robert Miller

Absent: Kerry White

Staff: Matt Wright, Community Development Director; Demetrius Ramirez, Chief Building Official; Tyler Farrow, Neighborhood Improvement Officer; Rex Navarro, Neighborhood Improvement Officer; and Carol Lee, Neighborhood Improvement Secretary

REVIEW OF November 16, 2023, MEETING MINUTES

No Comments

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Political signs

The City's website includes a political signs handout with the applicable codes. Prior to January 2021, the City limited the duration of time before and after an election that a political sign could be posted. However, to comply with previous court rulings regarding the First Amendment and Freedom of Speech, this duration of time limit was removed. There is no time limit on political signs, but there is still a limit on the number, size, and location of signs, as noted in the attached handout. This handout can be accessed on the Community Development's webpage under "Apply for Permits & Inspections" and "Planning & Zoning Guides." We recognize that this may be difficult for some to find and we are still fine tuning the recently updated webpage to improve accessibility:

- Demetrius Ramirez went over the political signs handout that was included in the Agenda packet regarding the size and replacement requirements.
- Matt Wright discussed on how long the political signs can stay up, who picks them up and where they can be placed when asked by the Committee:
 - The political campaign parties will pick them up and it is up to the HOA to decide where the political signs can be placed. The City cannot do anything about signs in private property, it's harder to confiscate. The signs in the right of way Staff can confiscate.

Abatement policy

The abatement process for nuisances (those items listed in Chapter 14 of the Code of Ordinances) may begin after the initial 10-day violation notice period has passed. Emergency items, such as abandoned iceboxes or open structures, are subject to only 24-hour notice prior to abatement as they pose a public safety hazard. Historically, staff has abated both high weeds/grass and junk/trash/debris nuisances. Once abatements have been completed by a third-party contractor, the City pays the contractor, sends

a bill to the property owner in the amount of the abatement plus lien recording fees, and records a lien at Cass County. The bill must be paid before the lien will be released. Some junk/trash/debris abatements can have significant costs. Tickets are generally issued concurrently with an abatement notice:

- Demetruis Ramirez gave a summary of the Abatement policy and procedures (Chapter 14 (Nuisances). Helpful links were included in the agenda packet.
- Wanda Thompson asked how many Third-Party Contractors we had and how much abatement cost we have incurred:
 - We currently have one contractor. Last Spring, we had an RFP out for bids for abatements. There were two Contractors interested and one Contractor decided not to pursue. The City has incurred about \$90,000 in abatements for this budgeted year, which ends at the end of March and the City has allowed for abatements of \$100,000.
- Demetrius Ramirez discussed with the Committee with the following:
 - Codes department getting quotes on bigger projects first before deciding to abate.
 - Staff is in contact with the Cass County Sheriff's Office on those being evicted and that he will receive an alert prior to the date of the eviction. Staff will then meet with the Sheriff's Office at the time of the eviction and will allow 24 hours before we would send out a violation notice if necessary.

Property maintenance enforcement

The City has adopted the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), with local amendments. Local amendments can be viewed in [Unified Development Code, Sec. 10-138](#). As the 2018 IPMC is copyrighted it can only be accessed through the International Code Council (ICC) online, subject to payment, or by purchasing the book through their website. Staff maintains multiple copies, which may be requested to be viewed at the Annex but cannot be removed nor copied.

Per the IPMC, the Code establishes minimum requirements for the maintenance of existing buildings through model code regulations that contain clear and specific property maintenance and property improvement provisions. The Code is intended to establish provisions that adequately protect public health, safety and welfare, and to establish minimum maintenance standards for basic equipment, light, ventilation, heating, sanitation and fire safety.

- Demetrius Ramirez reviewed the most IPMC common violations Staff uses.
- Council Member Rob Powell asked which Codes we use between the UDC or IPMC.
 - The IPMC is used with some exceptions of using the UDC. The IPMC is used with most cities.

OTHER DISUCSSIONS

Other items that were brought forward by the Committee for discussion, including:

- Firework Signs:
 - Only firework tent operators with firework permits are allowed to put up signs in Belton. There are 6 tent operators allowed in the City and they are permitted by the Fire department for Firework tents only but does not allow permit for signs. We are proposing to do away with the sign permit due to the signs are usually up for 7 days. Per Code there is 1 firework sign per tent but there are some putting out signs on other

properties and at certain intersections directing to their site. This is not a problem if it does not create a traffic hazard.

- Councilmember Rob Powell asked if signs were randomly showing up from another city in Belton how it is handled.
 - Codes will be updating later this year with clarification if it would be the property or business owners' responsibility.
- Dennis Hull inquired if business owners need to have a Belton business license for their signs.
- Snow Removal
 - Councilmember Rob Powell read an email that he forwarded to the Committee about snow removal and wanted to know if Staff leaves door hangers. Staff does not leave door hangers and he felt it should be taken more seriously. He also suggested there should be some kind of agreement with public works about not pushing snow piles on driveways and opening of sidewalks. Matt Wright forwarded Councilmember Rob Powell's email to Public Works.
 - Matt Wright read the Code for Section 19-107 Maintenance of Sidewalks. It does not mention snow removal and if we try to enforce, he felt we would get push back from the citizens.
 - We give leeway with cars parked in yard due to Public Works snow removal on the roads when asked by Dennis Hull.
 - Steve Hackett had a question about Sidewalk Maintenance of who is required to maintain sidewalks. The Code is written that the homeowner is responsible.
 - Dennis Hull asked if there were grants for sidewalks. There are grants, the City does have some funding 50/50 match.

NEXT MEETING DATE: Thursday, March 21, 2024

ADJOURNMENT

Matt Wright adjourned the meeting at 6:52 P.M.