MINUTES
WORK SESSION
WESTERVILLE CITY COUNCIL
March 27, 2007, 7:00 p.m., City Council Chambers

Council met in Work Session on March 27, 2007 with Council Members, Craig Treneff, Damon Wetterauer, Jr., Kathy Cocuzzi, Anne Gonzales, William Highfield, Staff, Director of Law Bruce E. Bailey and Clerk of Council Mary Johnston present. Diane Fosselman and Michael Heyeck were excused.

1. *HOUSING CODE AND PROPERTY MAINTENANCE.*
 Karl Craven, Planning and Development Director, is requesting City Council to reconsider property maintenance and rental property enforcement and would like feedback from Council on how to address the issue. Mr. Craven asked if the city wants to become more aggressive with enforcement or create a program where staff would systematically review all rental properties and continue to be complaint driven. Mr. Bailey stated the current procedure for enforcement is complaint driven and involves legal proceedings. Mr. Bailey stated ultimately the code could be changed to require a systematic review of rental properties in an effort to verify that they comply with the building code. Another option is to require an annual rental permit for rental properties with a condition of inspection of the dwelling. However, the more aggressive approach the city takes, the issue of more personnel and additional costs would need to be considered. Mr. Bailey stated House Bill 294, passed late last year, requires rental property owners to register with the county auditor.

Chairman Wetterauer asked for direction from City Council.

Mrs. Cocuzzi stated maybe the city should take a more aggressive approach on violators.

Mr. Lindimore stated there is no budget or staff to implement changes to the code. Mr. Lindimore is asking Council if staff should develop an approach to violators beyond the complaint driven process.

Mrs. Gonzales stated she would like to know the types of complaints received, the accurate count of rental properties, and the cost of alternatives and implementation.

Mr. Treneff stated his focus would be on rental properties. Mr. Treneff stated he would like a better feel of the location of rental properties. Mr. Treneff expressed his concerns with student housing in the Uptown District and felt it is a unique problem. Mr. Treneff stated Council should look at the code to preserve single family housing stock. Mr. Treneff stated he would like to look at the code on conversion and to adjust the complaint driven process.

Mr. Highfield stated this is not an easy subject to discuss. Mr. Highfield stated if the city continues with the complaint driven process, current housing conditions will decline. Mr. Highfield suggested an annual inspection and complaint driven process on rental properties. Mr. Highfield asked if current city staff could be trained to perform inspections. Mr. Highfield stated all city staff should pay attention to deteriorating housing and report findings, enforce current code and hire additional personnel to follow up on complaints.

Chairman Wetterauer stated the city's housing market needs maintenance and now is the time for action and to allow staff to do their job. Chairman Wetterauer suggested using student interns to create a housing inventory. Chairman Wetterauer stated the city has the code to enforce standards. It is the responsibility of Council to set a minimum standard and enforce that minimum standard. Chairman Wetterauer stated the city has not been enforcing the minimum standard and it's time to empower staff to do their job and report back to Council with a program that can be enforced.

Conclusion

City Council asked staff to provide a memo with recommendations on how staff would tackle this issue with enforcement procedures and costs. Mr. Craven will provide memo to Council in the April 6th Council Packet. Law Department is to review occupancy conversion code.

The Work Session adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

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    Mary J. Johnston, MMC   Damon E. Wetterauer, Jr.
    Clerk of Council   Chair of Council