

**CITY OF ISANTI
PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 12, 2013**

1. Meeting Opening.

A. Call to Order.

Stevens called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

B. Pledge of Allegiance.

Everyone rose for the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. Roll Call.

Members Present: Dave Englund, Kristi Gordon, Sue Larson, Cindy Lind-Livingston, Steve Lundeen, Michael Streiff III, and Sean Stevens.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Lisa Wilson, Planning and Parks Director and Clark Joslin, City Attorney.

D. Agenda Modifications.

Wilson stated that she had none.

2. Approval of Minutes from February 12, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting.

Stevens questioned if there were any comments or changes on the minutes.

Motion by Larson, second by Lundeen to approve the February 12th, 2013 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Motion was unanimously approved.

3. Public Hearings.

A. Request from Allen Torkelson for an Amendment to Ordinance No. 445 Zoning, Section 6 Residential Districts, Article 1 "R-1" Single-Family Residential District, Subdivision 7 Special Regulations (A) to amend the minimum livable floor space required above grade.

Wilson presented the information contained within the City staff memo. Wilson requested a recommendation from the Planning Commission, which would carry forth to the City Council meeting on March 19th.

Stevens opened the public hearing on the item at 7:05 p.m. Stevens questioned if there was anyone there to speak on behalf of the applicant.

Jim Lindberg, 200 3rd Avenue NE, Ste 300, Cambridge, MN 55008. Lindberg stated that he had started to plan to speak to the issue by introducing himself and letting everyone know that he is not some "Johnny come lately to the game". Lindberg stated that he has a genuine concern for what goes on in Isanti County. Lindberg stated that he practices law in Cambridge and has done so for 34 years. Lindberg stated that he has practiced longer than Mr. Joslin.

Joslin stated one year longer.

Lindberg provided his family history and background in Isanti County. Lindberg stated that he has lived his whole life in Isanti County and has witnessed what has taken place in the County and the three cities. Lindberg stated that he was City Attorney for the Cities of Cambridge and Braham for 20 some years. Lindberg stated that he had read through the staff report and it is a well written report. Lindberg stated

that he would be foolish to criticize the report, as it is based upon the Comprehensive Plan. Lindberg stated that he understood staff's role in reviewing the proposal at hand. Lindberg stated that he understood their role and responsibility in their review of the item. Lindberg stated that he will rely on the report and look at it factually. Lindberg stated that we are in the age of reality television and we need to look at the reality of the situation as well.

Lindberg stated that the question this evening is; why should we change the ordinance. Lindberg stated that the request is largely based upon economics. Lindberg stated that the construction plans add \$15,000 to \$20,000 to a house having to put all the square footage above grade, so it does lead to the higher priced home that the City is looking for. Lindberg stated that the practicality is that you have to build a bigger home, add a room on grade level or finish a room above the garage; and all add to the cost.

Lindberg stated that he had intended to bring a local builder by the name of Joe Charles, whose business is under the name JC Homes. Lindberg stated that several people that he built homes for last year had to be re-located to other communities because he could not build a home in Isanti for the price that these people could get loans or financing for. Lindberg stated that we are talking about 240 square feet in a lower level. Lindberg stated that is a finished family room and bath or a finished bedroom and bath. Lindberg stated that we talk about the footprint on a house. Lindberg stated that on a 40 foot house, the footprint is 6 feet. Lindberg stated that it is 10 feet by 4 feet and hardly noticeable.

Lindberg stated that he read through the Comprehensive Plan carefully. Lindberg stated that this property was platted in 2002 and that was when the 2002 Comprehensive Plan was approved. Lindberg stated that the lack of larger homes was mentioned and the plan was amended in 2008. Lindberg stated that the first plan came about in the boom of the housing market when people were buying homes in Isanti County and the cost of gas was so you could afford the commute. Lindberg stated that it was amended in 2008 when the recession was starting to kick in. Lindberg stated that the first question that they would need to address; is the plan still realistic. Lindberg stated that the Housing Plan called for 340 housing units in the five years since the adoption of the plan. Lindberg stated that 61 homes were built since the plan was adopted, so the City did not get 80% of the goal that was mentioned in the plan. Lindberg stated that the goals of the housing plan are not being met. Lindberg questioned if that was the fault of the City of Isanti. Lindberg stated that he did not believe so.

Lindberg stated that Isanti County had the highest per capita foreclosure rate in the State, which is per the Star Tribune articles. Lindberg stated that realistically the comprehensive plans and housing goals are goals, dreams, and desires. Lindberg stated that these were adopted at the height of the economic boom and the housing boom; and realistically what we have is empty lots and people moving away from the City because they can't meet the price point for the people interested in the area. Lindberg stated that we need to look at wishes and wants; and look at reality, what people want and what sells. Lindberg stated that they need to ask if they want to add homes and tax base to the City or plow streets for vacant lots. Lindberg stated that the infrastructure is there. Lindberg stated that the same number of bedrooms and people will be living in those homes. Lindberg questioned if this will be incompatible with surrounding districts. Lindberg stated no, as the surrounding area is similar types of residential homes. Lindberg stated that the denial is based on the Comprehensive Plan and he respects that. Lindberg questioned if the comprehensive plan and housing plan are realistic if it has only met 20% of the housing goal since its adoption.

Lindberg stated that he would submit to them his response, as a past city attorney, that he does not feel the plan is realistic. Lindberg stated that it is not the community's fault. Lindberg stated that the reality is that this is the type of housing that needs to be available to the people that can afford to live here. Lindberg questioned if they were really going to attract the higher level homes because in the past five years there have only been a few built. Lindberg stated that this would add housing to the City of Isanti and add to the tax base; using the infrastructure that is in place. Lindberg stated that in looking at the comprehensive plan, he questions what is going to be in this for the long run. Lindberg stated that none

of us have a crystal ball to predict that. Lindberg questioned what is realistic. Lindberg questioned if they were going to keep the lots empty. Lindberg stated that we have empty businesses and empty lots in the industrial area. Lindberg stated that the plan is failing to meet its goals. Lindberg stated that he is asking them to look at their zoning ordinance realistically. Lindberg stated that there is an 80% failure in those plans and it is time for a change. Lindberg stated that is what they are asking for is change.

Susie McCune, Isanti, stated that she has also lived her for 40 years and seen the changes in the housing. McCune stated that she can understand why they have implemented the changes over time in the housing, as the city did have a lot of the lower income and smaller units. McCune stated that she questions when we have these new homes built; they have room for things in the basement, but most are not finished. McCune stated that it is not a good idea to have homes half finished. McCune questioned why these smaller homes cannot be constructed in the areas that are zoned accordingly. McCune stated that she did not think any plan would have made a difference, as the housing market has been tough everywhere, particularly here. McCune stated that housing sales are going up and she has spoken to a mortgage broker; and even in Isanti things are changing. McCune questioned why we would get rid of a well thought out plan, so we can go back to what we had 10 or 15 years ago when we had small lower income homes. McCune stated that she did not want to see the City go back to that.

Stevens stated that these plans are 20 year pictures of where a community wants to go and where we see development coming from and going to. Stevens stated that he has been involved in the process and it is hard to throw a dart at any one point and time. Stevens stated that it does paint a broader picture. Stevens stated that they tried to throw a very wide net and have community conversations about where we want to be 20 years down the road. Stevens stated that we looked at who lives, plays, and does business in Isanti.

Stevens closed the hearing on the item at 7:23 p.m.

Lundeen questioned how many R-2 and R-3 lots were empty in the City of Isanti.

Wilson stated that staff had included the lot inventory sheet for the Planning Commission to review. Wilson stated that staff had estimated that number and included those numbers within the staff memo on the bottom on page 3 and top of page 4.

Lundeen stated that he had a comment about markets coming back and he has two friends that are real estate agents in the area; the buyers that are looking at homes are looking for what Mr. Torkelson has proposed. Lundeen stated that there is a shortage of these throughout Isanti County. Lundeen stated that they were booming when times were good; and have had their commissions cut. Lundeen stated that he understands looking at homes with unfinished basements. Lundeen stated that there are a lot 960 and 1200 square foot homes in which the basement was not finished. Lundeen stated that when he purchased his home, it was under construction, but the basement was not planned to be finished. Lundeen stated that he finished his when he bought it and that is a 1200 square foot house. Lundeen stated that he has spoken with Mr. Torkelson. Lundeen stated that he had never done any work for Mr. Torkelson and he probably never will, so he will get nothing out of this. Lundeen stated that Mr. Torkelson does not want to make every lot over there at 960; he would like to do 5 to 10 lots. Lundeen stated that he would just like to show that something is being done. Lundeen pointed out some areas that have homes that are being built closer to the metro area. Lundeen stated that there is a shortage in the market for smaller homes. Lundeen stated that he believes that if Mr. Torkelson had some homes there; and start there, something can continue to happen. Lundeen questioned the name of the development.

Wilson stated Isanti Meadows.

Lundeen stated that there is not a tree anywhere on the property. Lundeen stated that he would not want to build a large home with nothing in there. Lundeen stated that he did a lot of homes off of Whiskey Road; and they were smaller than 960 square feet. Lundeen stated that the people that bought those

homes that are still living there and are doing so because they bought within their means. Lundeen stated that people were losing their homes because people were getting money for homes that were not worth what they were being appraised at. Lundeen stated that in one house he owned he paid \$50,000; but they were trying to give him loans for \$370,000 when times were good. Lundeen questioned why that would be for a \$50,000. Lundeen stated that their whole lives are devoted to paying for the home and there is nothing left over to pay for electric bills or buy groceries.

Lundeen stated that he would never suggest that all of these lots should be 960 square foot houses, but he does think that if something is built there, then others will follow. Lundeen stated that there are some homes there that are barely over a 1000 square feet above grade, but they had to finish a bedroom and bathroom in the lower level to meet the requirements. Lundeen stated that as long as he is going to give you 1200 square feet finished then that is the key. Lundeen stated that he does not understand why it is cheaper to build up, but not horizontally.

Lundeen stated that lumber prices, working in construction, materials have gone up 4 to 8 percent since the first of the year. Lundeen stated that everything is increasing. Lundeen stated that discussed copper prices and the market. Lundeen stated that he would like to have the Planning Commission think about this. Lundeen stated that we need to think of the cost of the WAC and SAC fees as well as the water rates. Lundeen stated that this keeps getting pushed off stating that we are trying to pay for the development and infrastructure that was placed east of TH 65. Lundeen stated that if we bring in more homes then the prices should drop quicker, rather than wait out the five year plan.

Lundeen stated that this city does not carry enough industry in town to carry the high end homes. Lundeen stated that this is not just commercial, but industry, which drives people coming to an area. Lundeen stated that the City has to find a niche. Lundeen stated that giving them the affordable homes will help. Lundeen stated that he is not for giving him a rezoning for the entire area, but a few of the lots to start some smaller homes would be a benefit and as we move forward keep them at the 1200 square feet. Lundeen stated that he does understand; as he lives a block from this development.

Stevens stated that his criticism is that it does not just get applied to this development but to everything. Stevens stated that secondly it fractures the division between the R-1, R-2, and R-3 districts that are currently in place. Stevens stated that going back to 2008 and prior, we decided that this where we needed to go. Stevens stated that they spent hours thinking and talking about these options. Stevens stated that Isanti was a great option for people during the housing boom. Stevens stated that we are still trying to take a starter home community; and continue to create a City in which people can live, work and play in, but are able to step up into a larger home and hopefully have the amenities that are going to keep the resident in the executive homes. Stevens stated that he does not find the application meaningful change to the comprehensive plan. Stevens stated that we do need to fill our streets and diversify city services, but the comprehensive plan guides us as to how we want to grow and this request does not do so.

Lundeen questioned if Mr. Torkelson had conveyed to him if they plan on having a three car versus a single car.

Lindberg stated that he has discussed briefly discussed the plan with Mr. Torkelson, but he is in no position to make any decisions or have further discussion regarding that item.

Englund stated that he agreed with Mr. Stevens. Englund stated that this request would allow for this to happen in any other area that is R-1. Englund questioned what the property values would be for those that currently have larger homes in these areas.

Lundeen questioned what your property value would be if you had a home sitting in a field with vacant land around it versus if there were other homes surrounding it. Lundeen stated that with more houses

next to you of comparable value, then your value increases. Lundeen stated that if you have nothing around you, then the property value is lower.

Stevens stated that is as far as the City and County taxation is concerned.

Lundeen stated correct. Lundeen stated that he has been doing this for years and he has been around construction.

Stevens stated that if we are talking market value, the agent is just going to find another house that is comparable to yours. Stevens stated as similar to the one in question. Stevens stated that when they built in Isanti it was difficult to find comparable properties.

Lundeen stated that was because there was nothing selling in the area. Lundeen stated that is a flaw in appraisal values and comp value, as you may have to go out of the area.

Stevens stated that it still influenced what they were paying. Stevens stated that if it was the house next door or in Cambridge, the price would be influenced.

Lundeen stated that what if you had Italian marble on your floor or gold plated items; and another is chrome that is not taking into account in valuation.

Lind-Livingston questioned if there are other options to review lots on an individual basis. Lind-Livingston questioned if the wording could be changed to allow for these to be reviewed on an individual basis.

Wilson stated that with the text amendment, it is all or nothing. Wilson stated that properties within the same district need to be treated the same and subject to the same standards. Wilson stated that she cannot just pick lots out and arbitrarily review them. Wilson stated that we do have planned unit developments, in which there are modifications from zoning requirements throughout the development, but these are reviewed under different circumstances. Wilson questioned if she was answering the question.

Lind-Livingston questioned if every builder was given notice that this would be discussed.

Wilson stated that proper notice procedures were followed, so that others could come forward for the discussion.

Stevens questioned her question.

Lind-Livingston questioned if all builders in the R-1 could have the opportunity to request a variance from the standards.

Wilson stated that a property owner could request a variance from zoning standards.

Lind-Livingston stated that would result in each request being reviewed individually and each would have the same footing through a city process.

Larson stated that may need to be what needs to be done here because she would really like to see something built on the property. Larson stated that we are paying a lot for infrastructure on the east side of 65. Larson stated that the only way to help is to get something built. Larson stated that WAC and SAC are large and utility prices are up. Larson stated that gas prices increase. Larson questioned what that will do to Isanti. Larson stated that we need to do something to help our residents in the City by having more tax base. Larson stated that we need to have something happening; and we continue to try to bring industrial businesses in. Larson stated that we are sitting at a standstill since the housing bubble

burst. Larson stated that the best way to help residents is to bring something that would help elevate the tax base. Larson stated that the City has a huge bill to pay for the east side and we need to do something to help our residents out.

Stevens stated that he understands the concern. Stevens stated that he did not want to fit a square peg in a round hole.

Larson stated that she would like to take into consideration Mrs. Lind-Livingston's comments and have a developer come in and argue their point for a few lots to allow smaller homes. Larson stated that she does not want it open for the whole development. Larson stated she looked at the area and that the 960 would fit fine, but she did not want to see the whole development at that amount. Larson stated that there is not much difference between the two except the cost.

Englund stated that this is not what is in front of us. Englund stated that we have a text amendment to review. Englund stated that we want the housing to grow, but this is a cycle and it goes up and down over time. Englund stated that the community has seen it happen before. Englund stated that the request is for the entire R-1, not just a few lots here and there.

Lind-Livingston stated that she feels there should be options.

Gordon questioned the builder that was turning people away, why they were not trying to build on the lots that are zoned accordingly.

Lindberg stated that the price point of the lots may be the issue. Lindberg stated that he has worked with Mr. Torkelson since he started buying tax forfeited property; and at the high end of the market he could sell a lot for \$55,000. Lindberg stated that today, he can sell you a lot for \$7,500 on a contract for deed with nothing down with almost no interest. Lindberg stated that he can't sell a lot. Lindberg stated that it is probably the price point that this builder is looking at. Lindberg stated that the cost to construct the home is the same no matter the lot, but it has to be the selling point for the lot.

Streiff stated that his concerns are routed in the amount of housing available, as there is the inventory of foreclosed homes. Streiff stated that this adds to the inventory. Streiff stated that the foreclosed homes have caused utilities to go up too. Streiff stated that he does not feel it is the time to entice people to build, when we have existing homes.

Larson stated that an existing home does not add a new home to the tax rolls.

Streiff stated that someone is probably not paying the taxes on the foreclosed property, nor paying back utility fees. Streiff stated that if these homes are filled, they are on the tax rolls and utilities are being used and paid for.

Motion by Stevens, second by Englund to recommend denial of the proposed text amendment application as presented. Vote 5 – 2, with Larson and Lundeen voting nay.

Stevens stated that the item will pass to Council. Stevens stated that someone should be present at that meeting for the discussion. Stevens stated that the Council may have questions or concerns that were not presented for discussion at the Planning Commission level.

Wilson stated that the meeting will be on the 19th.

Lindberg questioned if it would automatically be placed on the agenda.

Wilson stated yes.

4. Other Business.

A. Review of Section 16 Signs of the Zoning Ordinance.

Wilson stated that the Planning Commission had requested that City staff contact the Chamber, so that we could work together on potential amendments to the sign ordinance. Wilson stated that there would appear to be quite a number of business owners in the audience to discuss the item. Wilson stated that she would turn the discussion over to the Planning Commission.

Stevens stated that they have been talking about signs at the last couple of meetings and there has been a lot of discussion about how to keep the community beautiful and how to have avenues for businesses to market their business and excel in the community. Stevens stated that the concerns presented have dealt with temporary sign and how they are handled as well as to how much signage is appropriate, how many and what should it cost. Stevens stated that they wanted to take a broad look at signs. Stevens stated that the group wanted to try to deal with the inherent problems of the code. Stevens questioned what they see when they drive down the street. Stevens questioned what helps their businesses and how they gain customers. Stevens questioned how they can help balance the issues. Stevens stated that one of the concerns that we have are the proliferation of the political signs. Stevens stated that these signs are temporary. Stevens stated that the ordinance right now allows for temporary signs year-round. Stevens questioned if they had thoughts or reactions to this item. Stevens questioned if the group had ideas on how to put a more measurable sign ordinance in place.

Larson questioned of those that use temporary signs, how important is it to your business. Larson questioned which months the signs are not necessary or do they absolutely need the sign for a year. Larson questioned if they needed to do something different because she knows that a lot of the temporary signs used on County Road 5 is the only way that business can be generated.

Dori Johnson, Charisma Boutique, stated that she does have a temporary sign permit and her sign is a 4 x 8 green changeable sign. Johnson stated that she changes it weekly and it is moveable. Johnson stated that she puts it out in April and takes it away in November, due to the snow issues. Johnson stated that it is very important to draw people in. Johnson stated that advertising does not work and this draws people in.

Stevens questioned how much it cost her for the sign, not for the City permit.

Johnson stated that her husband made the sign. Johnson stated that it is over \$100 a week to rent one of the big black signs that you see. Johnson stated that you get a better deal if you keep it longer. Johnson stated that this sign is not permanent. Johnson stated that she does have a sandwich board and flags that she puts out. Johnson stated that there is nothing on 65 that states we have anything down on CSAH 5, so we have to do what we can.

Larson stated that she thought Mrs. Johnson's looks nice. Larson questioned when she drives County Road 5 and sees all the signs, how does she think it looks.

Johnson stated that she agreed there were too many, but she does not know how you would limit that. Johnson stated that if everyone has something going on, they need the signs.

Larson stated that the question is what can be done so that County Rd 5 does not look like a mini Las Vegas. Larson questioned what would work for the businesses. Johnson questioned other than signage. Johnson stated that 5 must be beautified. Johnson stated that there is nothing there to welcome people to shop in the community. Johnson stated that it is the same on 5 and on Main Street. Johnson stated that there may be a sidewalk in front of the building and she will lose the space she currently uses. Johnson stated that she has no advertisement.

Stevens questioned if the tenants have discussed with the building owner having signs on the building front.

Johnson stated that they all have signs.

Stevens questioned more signs.

Johnson stated yes. Johnson stated that they have lighted signs above the door, so she did not know where other signs could be placed. Johnson discussed the freestanding sign for all the businesses. Johnson stated that something needs to be on 65 to notify people that there is retail in Isanti. Johnson stated that there are too many signs on 5.

Larson questioned if anyone had anything additional. Larson questioned how they felt about the signage that is there.

Mike Urban, Urban's Hardware, stated that they are relatively new. Urban stated that paying for advertising costs is hard. Urban stated that if the sign works, then they will keep it there. Urban stated that the free market should establish that on its own. Urban stated that he should be able to just place a sign. Urban stated that if they want to pitch in and deduct something off their property taxes, then he would be all for that. Urban stated that he pays enough in property taxes that he does not want to see his costs go up. Urban stated that he wants to know to other businesses have the same issues; and they cannot keep increasing prices. Urban stated that advertising is something that you do not see the benefit from every day, where with a sign you will. Urban stated that he does not care for a lot of signs, but understands why they are there, and he wants to see business flourish.

Stevens questioned if the City enacted rules that dramatically limited that amount of time that you could have a temporary sign would it bother him.

Urban stated that would not bother him, if it followed his plan. Urban stated that if he had different plans and were told no, he would be offended because he pays taxes and should be able to do what he has to do.

Stevens questioned if the temporary proved to be beneficial, would he think about investing in a more permanent solution.

Urban stated yes, but factors would need to be weighed. Urban stated that he heard comments about coverage on the window. Urban stated that he has two windows that are completely covered and he thinks it looks okay. Urban stated that if it is hurting or offending someone, then he would remove it; but it is his property. Urban stated that he does not want to see his rights limited because he is trying to run a business in the community.

Englund commented on the window coverings. Englund stated that when all the windows are covered, the questions are raised as to if this is appropriate.

Lundeen stated that the point of the discussion is to come to an agreement.

Larson stated that they have talked about a big billboard on 65 and it is very costly. Larson questioned if the businesses along with the help of the Chamber could work to get signage on 65.

Johnson questioned placing multiple listings on a billboard.

Larson pointed out a particular location where one is located near Pine City. Larson stated that a few different businesses could be listed.

Johnson questioned the sign that is located for the soccer group near 65. Johnson questioned why that can't be utilized.

Lundeen stated that it is the soccer group's sign and they received permission to place it there.

Johnson stated that she did not believe it was completely initiated by the soccer group; she thought the City was somewhat involved. Johnson questioned if that is an option.

Larson questioned if that is possible if a multiple listing of business sign could be placed there.

Streiff stated that there could be a rotation of business listings on the sign.

Wilson stated that it would be an off-premise sign and MnDOT does have some control along TH 65 for these types of signs. Wilson stated that she has asked some questions previously, but had not heard a response. Wilson stated that she would follow-up on this.

Streiff questioned the BP sign.

Wilson stated that the BP sign is an on-premise sign as the business is located on the property. Wilson stated that there are regulations for off-premise only.

Lundeen questioned if the City had anything to do with the soccer sign.

Wilson stated that the EDA may have worked on something with that sign. Wilson stated that she would follow-up with Mr. Sullivan.

Johnson questioned the political signs. Johnson questioned if there were time limits on these signs.

Larson stated that there are rules and regulations for these and they are exempt signs in the City during the election period.

Stevens stated that he wants them to sell lots of stuff, but that needs to be leveraged against the beautification of the roadway and health/safety concerns. Stevens stated that the City is trying to get a handle on how to create something that works for all parties involved. Stevens stated that there can be some sort of line drawn that states this is as much as we can help or restrict. Stevens stated that it comes down to the person that starts a business. Stevens stated that we are trying to find a solution.

Susie McCune, Isanti, stated that she likes all of the signs. McCune stated that she has gone to communities where they are so sterile. McCune stated that there are no signs and it is so boring and there is no personality. McCune stated that she does not want to see junky signs in town. McCune stated that she wants to be able to place a sign out for a sale and not have someone come out and say it is going to cost you to place the sign. McCune stated that any profits that would have been made go out the window with the permit. McCune stated that businesses should not be charged for every little sign. McCune stated that the businesses should be able to run their business the way that they see fit. McCune stated that some businesses need signage and others do not. McCune stated that if she wants to decorate the window, then she should be able to cover the whole darn window. McCune stated that all businesses should not suffer because one business cannot be respectful. McCune stated that part of the charm of living here is having signs for the businesses. McCune stated that this is why she lives here and not in Plymouth.

Lind-Livingston stated that the corridor needs something like trees or shrubs. Lind-Livingston stated that she does not mind the signs. Lind-Livingston stated that she agrees with the charm. Lind-Livingston

stated that some can be too obtrusive. Lind-Livingston stated that investment should be made to make the area look nicer.

Stevens stated that he saw a lot shaking heads when the comment was made to stay out of it.

Tim Kent, Isanti VFW, stated that there has been a digital sign placed and people are able to rent time on the sign. Kent stated that he did some research for Lindstrom. Kent stated that he has lived here all his life. Kent stated that there are banners that are looking rough and should be removed. Kent stated that this is a good common sense meeting and he is impressed that they care.

Jill Reller, Signs by Jill, stated that she has been in the sign business since 1979. Reller stated that she was part of the sign ordinance update a few years back. Reller stated that the window covering at that time was for protection purposes, if there was a thief, then a cop could see someone in there. Reller stated that she never thought about it being your business and you should be able to do your thing. Reller stated that it should be attractive.

Stevens stated that there are murals on buildings in Pine City and they paint over windows; and it looks really snappy.

Reller stated that the signs do need to be maintained and attractive. Reller stated that they should be readable at a distance. Reller stated that it will only help the business if the sign is attractive. Reller stated that has been her slogan over the years. Reller stated that if you can't read the sign, then people will pass it by. Reller stated that it puts your personality out there. Reller stated that if the banner is flapping in the wind and been out there too long, then the City needs to request its removal.

Stevens questioned if the group would be interested in creating a sub-committee group. Stevens stated that people can be on that group to help with the ordinance. Stevens questioned how to facilitate the conversation, so that in a short period of time, we can have something on paper to review.

Reller stated that she would be willing to work on it again.

Johnson stated that a sub-committee works, but those individuals would need to speak to other businesses that may not know about the discussion at hand. Johnson stated that she did not realize that it was already being discussed.

Stevens clarified that the discussion has been limited. Stevens stated that most of the discussion has been to identify issues and to try to figure out how to move forward with the process.

Lundeen stated that he had brought it up to Tracy Neifert after the next meeting. Lundeen stated that the group had requested that the businesses be brought in for the discussions. Lundeen stated that it has been briefly talked about previously. Lundeen stated that it has not been drawn out discussion to this point. Lundeen stated that the sooner it is resolved, the better off all parties will be.

Johnson stated that not all businesses know about the discussion and need to be brought into this discussion. Johnson stated that it would be that group's responsibility to go door to door.

Stevens stated that going door to door can be difficult. Stevens stated that he did want to see a wide net thrown for this discussion. Stevens stated that there are a couple of folks that may be able to help in a sub-committee level. Stevens questioned if we were under a time frame.

Wilson stated no. Wilson stated that staff will move forward according to how they are directed.

McCune stated that there does need to be some kind of decorative boulevard along 5. McCune stated that would result in better signs. McCune stated that people want to live up to what is there. McCune stated that there is no standard to look up to now.

Englund stated that the property owner issues, is the issue.

McCune stated that there could be a tax incentive to try to do this. McCune stated that would help the entire City. McCune stated that making the signs better will not make 5 look better.

Johnson stated that there are welcome signs on the light poles with hanging baskets.

Larson stated that 5 is a hard area to do this, as we do not own the street lights. Larson discussed the old Christmas banner. Larson stated that there are limitations on poles.

Lundeen stated that the right-of-way is also the County's. Lundeen stated that even though it is in the City, we need the blessing of the County.

Larson stated that they have looked at what we can do to help businesses with improving their store fronts. Larson stated that we may need to go back and look at those.

Reller stated that public needs to be educated. Reller pointed out the "For Sale" sign at the corner of 4th Ave and Main.

Lundeen stated that there is something in the Isantian that lets people know they cannot be doing this.

Debbie Bray, Isanti, stated that there is GPS marketing available, in which someone entering the store will get a beep on their phone for a coupon when they enter the store. Bray stated that millions of people are buying from the internet, phones, Ipad, etc. Bray stated that she had concerns about consistency. Bray stated that she is a visual person. Bray stated that she purchased her sign permit and did everything right. Bray stated that it bothers her that others feel that they do not need to get a permit. Bray stated when they cover up your sign that is discouraging. Bray stated that education is important. Bray stated that everyone should have to pay for the signs and others should not be able to just slide because they do not know or it is the weekend.

Stevens stated that staff is available to enforce the ordinance if there are issues. Stevens stated that we should all have to play by the rules if we are going to create them.

Jeremiah Sedler, Reller Signs, stated that he would be interested in serving on the subcommittee group.

Motion by Lundeen, second by Stevens to form a sub-committee group. Motion approved unanimously.

5. Discussion Items.

A. None.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Larson, second by Lundeen to adjourn the March 12th, 2013 meeting of the Planning Commission. Motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Dated at Isanti, Minnesota this 9th day of April 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Wilson, AICP
Planning and Parks Director