



City of Othello
Planning Commission Meeting
July 15, 2024
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chair Alma Carmona called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Brian Gentry, Alma Carmona, Daniela Voorhies, Maria Martinez, Ruth Sawyer

Absent: Chair Chris Dorow (out of town), Kevin Gilbert

Staff: Community Development Director Anne Henning, Building and Planning Secretary Zuleica Morfin

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Kim Bailey, Yaremy Ibarra, Danae Mendez

PUBLIC INPUT

Kim Bailey, a retired teacher from Othello, said having had probably 1,000 kids pass through her classroom, her interest was for the kids. She said she wanted to talk about the next neighborhood plan that will maybe go across from Wal-Mart. She would like to see a park-like setting go into the neighborhood rather than creating block after block and grid after grid of tarmac cement and one house after another. Back in her younger days, she was a world traveler and went to London, Paris, Quebec City, and Romania. She said all those Cities created little pockets of beauty. You would walk 5 blocks along a neighborhood and there was a block set aside of green grass, trees, and benches. She said for her it was important to create pockets of beauty and when you have a little neighborhood park like in France or Walla Walla, people get to know each other.

MINUTES APPROVAL

April 15, 2024, minutes approved M/S Brian Gentry/ Ruth Sawyer

ZONING UPDATE- HOME OCCUPATIONS- OMC 17.59

When the zoning code was updated (2017-2020), staff and the Planning Commission's goal was to deal with the most glaring inconsistencies and the most important aspects that needed change, with the idea that we could come back to the other sections as we discovered problems with them. At the September 2023 meeting, the planning commissioners renewed discussion of home occupations. We started this work in spring 2022, because the topic had been coming up as an issue, but then more pressing issues crowded out completing this item at that time. Now there is a business owner directly affected by this regulation, so we are back to looking at this code section. The September 2023 meeting included discussion of the purpose statement and review of the table comparing standards in various cities. Ms. Henning told commissioners there was someone who would like to have a barber shop in their home but that is currently prohibited. She provided a draft based on the previous discussions by the commissioners, so that commissioners could review it and compare it to what they had in mind, focusing on the list of prohibited uses.

Vice Chair Alma Carmona read over the proposed prohibited uses: Retail sales, kennels, stables, animal hospitals, pet grooming, real estate offices, restaurants, medical and dental clinics, vehicle repair,

painting, servicing, and renting; welding and metalwork; cabinet, carpentry, and paint shops; mortuaries, private or nursery schools, and private clubs.

Commissioner Brian Gentry said his only three issues with the ordinance were parking, signage, and the traffic that would be coming in and out. Vice Chair Alma Carmona said from what she could remember the last time they had talked about this, they talked about allowing one vehicle per appointment. Ms. Henning said she remembered they had talked a lot about it but didn't remember that they had settled on it. In the existing OMC 17.59.080 it states that no traffic shall be generated by such home occupation in greater volume than would normally be expected in a residential neighborhood, and any need for parking generated by the conduct of such home occupation shall be met off the street and other than in a required front yard. Commissioner Gentry said he was ok with this although it was a little vague.

Commissioner Ruth Sawyer asked if there are a lot of existing businesses at homes. Ms. Henning said there has not been a good way to track them so she couldn't really answer that.

Commissioner Brian Gentry said if they were keeping it to one appointment at a time, there wouldn't be two cars unless a couple arrived in separate cars. Vice Chair Alma Carmona said they should maybe allow two cars at most per appointment. Commissioner Gentry said they would have to be able to park off the street and it'll start looking commercial. Commissioners agreed that the verbiage for the parking restrictions was good.

Commissioners removed pet grooming from the prohibited list, based on it being similar to beauty and barber shops which are being removed from the prohibited list.

Vice Chair Alma Carmona asked about the purpose statement of the home occupations. Ms. Henning replied that she did add the new purpose statement the Commission had drafted but she forgot to underline it. It is 17.59.005. Vice Chair Carmona read the purpose statement:

17.59.005 Purpose.

Home occupations provide residents with the option to use their residence for small scale business activities while guaranteeing all residents freedom from excessive noise, traffic, nuisance, fire hazard, and other possible effects of commercial uses in residential neighborhoods.

Commissioners liked the purpose. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies asked if they needed to define small scale. Commissioner Brian Gentry said with the traffic and the parking it would be enforced.

Commissioners reviewed the sign provisions:

17.59.050 Advertising and appearance restricted

There shall be no change in the outside appearance of the building or premises, or other visible evidence of the conduct of such home occupation other than one sign, not exceeding one square foot in area, nonilluminated, and mounted flat against the wall of the principal building.

With this being what is currently in the code, commissioners agreed to leave as is.

Commissioner Martinez arrived at 6:23.

Bob Carlson asked commissioners to look at the past minutes where they discussed allowing a non-resident employee and rediscuss it. Commissioners had voted against allowing to have an employee. Vice Chair Carmona mentioned that allowing an outside employee meant there would likely be another vehicle parked at the site. Ms. Henning suggested that if they were worried about vehicles, they should regulate

the number of vehicles associated with the business. Consensus on leaving it as stated in the draft: no outside employees.

Ms. Henning will bring the chapter back with the changes at the next meeting for a public hearing and recommendation to council.

SUBDIVISION UPDATE- OMC TITLE 16- CONTINUED DISCUSSION

When property is divided, it must be done through the subdivision process. Each jurisdiction sets standards based on state requirements. Othello Municipal Code Title 16: Subdivisions is our local version of that. This code is in need of a major update. There are many provisions that don't match up to current practice or conflict with other sections of the code. In addition, the Title is long, confusing, and overly complicated. Most sections of the Title have not been updated since initial adoption in 1995. The intent of updating the Subdivision Title is to streamline the process, organize it better, make it easier to understand, and eliminate discrepancies. This title is complicated to work on because the chapters are so interrelated, requiring a lot of time and effort by both staff and the Commission to understand the issues and try to solve them in the best way possible. The Commission has done a considerable amount of work on this title already, but it has been spread over several years.

The Commission looked at the following provisions:

16.29.040 Neighborhood Minor streets- Discouragement of through traffic

Neighborhood Minor streets which serve primarily to provide access to abutting property only shall be designed to discourage through traffic, including traffic calming measures such as curves.

Ms. Henning asked the Commission how they felt about the proposed changes to this section. Vice Chair Alma Carmona said she remembered as part of the traffic safety plan they wanted to encourage the developer to put in traffic circles and if not, they would have to go back later and put them in. Ms. Henning said the traffic safety plan was more for existing streets rather than new developments, which could be designed differently. Vice Chair Carmona said raised sidewalks needed to be put in because there is a problem in the existing developments as is. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies suggested ending it at "including traffic calming measures "and not trying to list them.

16.29.210 Block-Lengths

In general, blocks shall be as long as is reasonably possible consistent with the topography and the needs for convenient access, circulation, control and safety of street traffic, and type of land use proposed, but ordinarily, Residential block lengths shall not exceed six twelve hundred feet or be less than three hundred feet. [Shorter block lengths provide better connectivity and walkability and slow traffic by creating more intersections. Original Othello from 8th to 14th has 300' block lengths, and the blocks from 7th to 8th and 13th to 14th are slightly longer] Residential blocks longer than 600' may be allowed when a mid-block multi-use pathway is provided through the block, and a raised crosswalk is provided for the mid-block crossing. Block length shall be measured from the edges of the lots, not including right-of-way. [March 2021, Commission discussed also requiring a raised crosswalk in this situation, confirmed by Commission April 2024].

Ms. Henning said the Commission had previously discussed that if the block is longer than 600 feet, it would need a pedestrian walkway through that block and a raised crosswalk. She asked the Commission to think about who was going to be responsible for that extra sidewalk, including shoveling snow, pulling weeds, and eventually repairing the concrete. The Sagestone development has pedestrian walkways and the plat states that adjacent lot owners are to maintain it. Commissioners wondered who maintains the walkways at Palos Verdes and the middle school.

Ms. Henning told commissioners she had not put in language about fencing, but they should think about whether to restrict fencing along those walkways. People don't like others looking into their backyards but if there is a tall fence, it can turn the path into a scary hallway. Vice Chair Alma Carmona said she was leaning more towards allowing the homeowner to put up a fence. She said the walkway at Palos Verdes has a fence, and although it's a little tight it's ok because it's a short distance. Commissioners agreed to allow abutting homeowners to put up a fence. Ms. Henning said something she had seen in other codes was that they didn't allow for walkways to have corners so that people could be seen from both ends so that it didn't create a safety issue. Commissioners like that.

16.29.280 Tree planting.

Street planting plans in duplicate must be submitted to the commission and receive its approval before planting is begun. Care of any trees that are planted by the subdivider will be the responsibility of the adjacent landowner. *[March 2021 Planning Commission direction was that this provision should be removed and coordinated with the revisions to the Landscape chapter OMC 17.74]*

Since March 2021, City Council has reviewed the landscape chapter and has determined that the developer shouldn't be required to put in landscaping and that it should be up to the homeowner to install it. But the problem here is how to get the homeowner to plant a tree because in the landscape code they have a year to put in landscaping and no requirement for any trees. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said it should be up to the homeowner whether they want to plant a tree because it's a lot of responsibility. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies asked Ms. Henning who put in the trees on 14th Ave and who maintains them. Ms. Henning said these trees were put in as a city project and Vice Chair Carmona said they are watered by the city.

Vice Chair Alma Carmona said neighborhoods need trees because they make it homey and keep things cooler, but she didn't like what they do to the concrete. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he was a little torn on this one, he didn't like forcing people to do things, but the City should encourage trees. Commissioner Maria Martinez said she wanted the neighborhood to look nice but what if the tree starts growing into the pipelines, so she was also torn on this one. Ms. Henning said there is a list of approved trees in the landscape code (17.74.110) that are approved as street trees and shouldn't impact pavement. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he was trying to think of how they could encourage homeowners to put in trees without forcing, maybe a property tax incentive? Vice Chair Carmona said they could have the developer put in the tree but that might create a nuisance. Commissioner Gentry mentioned that he works with a developer in Connell who puts in the front yard and one tree for each house because he wants his development to look nice. Vice Chair Carmona said she felt like this topic needed more discussion. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies suggested that every other house be required to have a tree, so the buyer could choose a house with a tree or without a tree. Vice Chair Carmona asked Commissioner Gentry if the buyers have been happy about having the landscaping already installed. He said they are very happy and there have been no complaints. Vice Chair Carmona suggested requiring the developer put in one tree per lot, not the other landscaping or irrigation, just one tree per house, and not installed until there was a buyer who would maintain it.

OMC 16.52 Reimbursement Agreements

For the next meeting, Commissioners will look over the reimbursement chapter from the city of Kent to discuss how it compares to Othello's reimbursement chapter.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:27pm. Next meeting is Monday, August 19, 2024.



Chris Dorow, Chair

Date: 8-19-2024



Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary

Date: 8-19-2024