



City of Othello
Planning Commission Meeting
December 16, 2024
Zuleica Morfin

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Dorow called the meeting to order at 6:01pm.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chair Chris Dorow, Brian Gentry, Ruth Sawyer, Daniela Voorhies, Maria Martinez

Absent: Kevin Gilbert, Alma Carmona

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

Attendees: Bob Carlson, Jose Garza, Rob Simmons

PUBLIC INPUT

Rob Simmons said there was something new he had noticed and wanted to bring to the attention of the commission. He asked the commissioners what the purpose of the improved parking was when you're coming off an already graveled alleyway. He didn't see what was wrong with having gravel for parking. He had gone around town and saw some triplexes that were built before the new code when paved parking wasn't a requirement and seemed just fine. Commissioner Chris Dorow said he would put hard surface going into a garage but in Mr. Simmons' case there wasn't going to be a garage. Ms. Henning said her best guess as to why the code was changed to require paved parking probably had to do with the maintenance of the gravel. Chair Chris Dorow raised the question of how they would maintain the integrity of the surface. Mr. Simmons said people parking on lawns used to be not allowed and he sees it happening a lot. Chair Chris Dorow said it was still in fact not allowed.

MINUTES APPROVAL

November 18, 2024, minutes approved M/S Sawyer/Gentry

Zoning Update - OMC 17.61, 9.33, 17.56.040,050, & 055- Off Street Parking, RV Parking & Storage, Vision Clearance at Intersections- Public Hearing and Recommendation to City Council

The last extensive review of the Off-Street Parking requirements was in 2018. At the September 2024 Planning Commission meeting, local resident Rob Simmons explained his difficulties in designing a triplex that meets the requirement for 8' setback for parking spaces accessed from an alley. The Planning Commission agreed to review the Off-Street Parking chapter. During review by Planning and Code Enforcement staff, parking and storage of RVs and other vehicles was identified as a related issue that also needs to be addressed, as well as vision clearance at intersections. All of these updates were reviewed by the Commission at their November 2024 meeting, and were introduced to the Council at their December 2, 2024, meeting.

Ms. Henning told commissioners that when she introduced the topic to the City Council, there were some objections to reducing the 8ft alley setback, due to blocking of the alley and also larger vehicles not having enough space to make the turn. Chair Chris Dorow said he couldn't see how a 3ft vs an 8ft affected it because it would be the space in the alley that would determine that and not the runway. Ms. Henning mentioned that the Police Chief is working on a new enforcement process for alley parking violations. Rob

Simmons had done some research and told commissioners that a 2025 crew cab 4-wheel drive pickup with a long box is 21ft and a 15-passenger van is 19ft.

Commissioners asked Ms. Henning if the city council had any comments regarding their recommendation for restaurant parking. She checked her notes and said they hadn't.

At 6:28pm Chair Chris Dorow opened the public hearing on the proposed changes for off-street parking, RV parking, and vision clearance at intersections. Bob Carlson suggested that in vision clearance, the elevation of 3 ½ feet above the street or 3 ½ feet above the curb should be 3 feet above the curb or 3 ½ feet above the street so that it is the same. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said she would like to see the shrubs be lower than 3 feet. Ms. Henning said she had looked at the fence requirements for front yards and those cannot be taller than 3 feet above the curb, so she suggested making the requirement for shrubs the same. Commissioners agreed to make the change to 3 feet above curb and 3 ½ feet above the street so that they are the same. With no further comments, the public hearing was closed at 6:32pm.

At the last meeting, commissioners discussed restaurant parking and liked .75 for every 100 square feet of building. The staff report included a chart showing existing parking at restaurants and what would be required at .6/100, .7/100, .75/100, .8/100, and the existing requirement of 1/100. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said she didn't like the idea of lowering the standards for future businesses, she would like to see them held at a higher standard. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies said most existing restaurants were close to .75 so she was ok with that. Commissioner Brian Gentry agreed and felt that .75 was a good compromise. Commissioner Maria Martinez agreed as well. Chair Dorow asked Bob Carlson for his opinion. Mr. Carlson also liked the .75 as long as it didn't go lower than that. Chair Chris Dorow's thought on this was to be careful about preventing growth by having rules that are too restrictive.

Ms. Henning mentioned she had recommended changing the verbiage related to used car sales by having it apply to all car sales areas. Commissioners all agreed with removing the word "used" from these sections.

Commissioners discussed the hard surface parking off an alley that Rob Simmons had brought up. Chair Chris Dorow mentioned how he had driven around some of the alleys in town and noticed how much gravel there was that people park on. He would like it to be compacted for maintenance purposes. He felt it would lower the cost of housing. Rob Simmons told commissioners they shouldn't allow gravel off an already paved alley. Chair Chris Dorow asked Mr. Simmons what his thought was if the alley was paved later after the building was done such as his triplex. Mr. Simmons said it would be reasonable, but it wouldn't handle all the current properties that have gravel. Ms. Henning said they could use the same standard as parking off a gravel street, but she asked commissioners if they wanted to require a covenant for paved parking if the alley is paved. Commissioners agreed to not require a covenant for alley parking.

Motion passed to recommend the changes as discussed to City Council. M/S Gentry/Voorhies

ZONING UPDATE/Housing Action Plan Strategies - OMC 17.09,17.20, 17.56 - Definitions, Setbacks, Eave Overhang, House Width, Cottage Housing, Design Standards - Discussion

In 2021, Othello adopted a Housing Action Plan that identifies strategies, actions, and policy tools to increase housing supply and affordability. Since that time, we have implemented some of the strategies but there are still many we haven't explored, and housing availability and affordability continue to be concerns. The staff report included small houses/small lots, cottage court development, house width, setbacks, overhangs, design standards, and townhouses.

Setbacks

Chair Chris Dorow said setbacks were pretty straightforward for him; he really liked the setback of 10 feet for a building and 20 feet for a garage because it gives people more freedom on how to build their houses. Commissioner Brian Gentry said it would give more space to build. Chair Dorow said allowing eave overhang into the front setback should also be allowed. Ms. Henning said if they were ok with allowing townhouses, she would need to add language to not requiring setbacks for attached dwellings. Commissioners will review next time.

House Width

Ms. Henning asked commissioners if they were ok with deleting the 24-foot house width. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said the tiny house movement was very creative, and people build them out of a lot of different things. Commissioners agreed to get rid of the 24-foot house width.

Design standards

Ms. Henning said the Housing Action Plan recommended adding some regulations for design standards for denser development. She asked if commissioners wanted to require that residences have any kind of design standard such as requiring to have their entrances on the front and some sort of porch. Commissioner Ruth Sawyer said she didn't like the idea of being told how she should design her home. Commissioner Voorhies felt design standards could be set for specific types of buildings. Trees were mentioned.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Brian Gentry said he had some concerns about 7th Ave. with the new apartments, he felt that the traffic on that street would become a problem and maybe there needed to be something to slow down traffic. Chair Chris Dorow asked how the traffic on Ash Street and the other end of 7th Ave. seeing as there are apartments there as well. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he didn't see a problem at that end. Chair Dorow asked about traffic counts. Commissioner Gentry also said he has seen a lot of drag racing from Main Street and Lee and about 4 accidents off of Hamlet and 7th Ave. Commissioner Brian Gentry said he thought it was weird how we have hearings that affect everyone but no one from the public attends. So, he wondered how to better get the word out. Ms. Henning said that hearings are published in the newspaper, and they are posted on the lobby TV screens and the bulletin board. Chair Dorow mentioned that they will hear about it if they are not doing things right. He feels that people talk to him because they know he's on the commission, then they don't have to worry about it. Commissioner Daniela Voorhies suggested doing a Facebook poll on whatever question it is that they are interested in talking about. It was mentioned there should be more speed humps to slow traffic, but they need to be taller and closer together, as was recommended in the Planning Commission's traffic safety plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:01pm. Next meeting is Tuesday, January 21, 2025.



Chris Dorow, Chair

Date: 2/18/25



Zuleica Morfin, Building and Planning Secretary

Date: 2/18/25