

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING: February 10, 2015

A workshop of the West City Council was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at 6:00 PM at the West Community Center to discuss the city's current building regulations and codes. The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Members present at workshop: Mayor Muska, Jay Gerik, Cheryl Marak, Brian Muska, Stevie Vanek, Al Vanek.

Mayor Muska opened the meeting by saying that several council members were hearing complaints from residents and builders regarding the costs associated with the building codes and using Bureau Veritas. Mayor Muska introduced guest speaker, Cathy Groppe who is a retired employee of the City of Waco in which she worked in the building inspection department for thirty-one years. Mayor asked Cathy to speak in regards to her experiences at the City of Waco and to provide insight into the building process, procedures, and fees.

Mayor said the safety of our citizens is the main concern for him and the council. It's important to have code enforcement and inspections to ensure that all safety precautions are taken. Cathy Groppe said that the City of Waco has their own inspectors on staff. She wasn't exactly sure what an inspector in Waco received as compensation but she said at least \$30,000 plus benefits and retirement. She stated that all plumbing inspectors must have a license. The City of Waco had different inspectors, each specialized in certain areas. The City of Waco charges by the square foot and charges for all permits (electrical, plumbing, etc.). She stated as an example: if you take a \$200,000 house in The City of Waco you would pay around \$691 for permits and inspections. If the inspector had to re-inspect there was an additional fee after the third visit. If you take a \$200,000 house in the City of West, you would pay about \$932 dollars in fees which included plan review, all permits/fees and there would be no charges for re-inspections. Again, the City of Waco has all in-house people whereas the City of West has to use a third party.

Cheryl Marak said the main complaints that she has heard seems to be that we went from a \$25.00 building permit, no codes, no inspections to Bureau Veritas which seems to be much higher than neighboring cities. We also went from no building codes, to adopting the 2009 residential code and then we adopted the 2012 residential code. Cheryl Marak stated that the people of West want their money to stay in West, and Bureau Veritas has inspectors coming out from the Fort Worth area. Cheryl agrees that the main issue is safety but does not feel like we should pay all of the charges and fees to some company based in Dallas/Ft. Worth area. Cheryl said that she has researched our fees and we seem to be higher than Waco and Temple. Brian Muska said that he has heard of several complaints regarding the 2012 residential building code. He said that you must pressurize the pipes before you pour the concrete and if it rains you must re-dig it out since the rain water fills those trenches. They must re-dig for inspections and this is timely and costly. He also said that the vacuum and insulation test, the blower door test must be done and he heard that is costly as well. The builders and contractors are also upset with the Energy Test that must be done by a third party. Steve Vanek said he has heard that the concern of cost and time it takes for all of the inspections seems to be a heavy burden and delays the builder.

Mayor Muska commented that maybe we should just pass the cost off by going up on all taxes on everyone, those who are rebuilding and not rebuilding. Mayor does not want to do that, but it could be an option. Another option he suggested is possibly having someone from the Waco area to do all of our inspections, how much money would be saved? Another option, the city charges a max fee of \$300 for residential and we could possibly go down on that if need be. Cheryl said that the citizens do not seem to be concerned with the city fee since those dollars they know are going to stay in this area. She said they would like to see the cost associated with everything, a break down would be nice. Al Vanek stated that he could put the spreadsheet with the fees on the website and publish it. This spreadsheet could show all cost associated with the project which might help alleviate this problem.

Al Vanek said that Bureau Veritas does plan review for us. A plan review must be checked thoroughly, site plan for offsets/setbacks, floor plans, occupied room must be 7 foot, and windows must not be more than 44" above ground. Multi-story houses you must have a set of structural documents to accompany the plan review. All elevations and 75% masonry requirement must be calculated. The building code also requires all engineered slabs. Al stated that we want consistency and this is what the Bureau provides us with. Cheryl Marak stated that she had one person who said he got a different inspector every time. Scott Knapke our city clerk said he knows that the Bureau has three different inspectors and that they try to go to the same job every time but sometimes it just does not work out that way.

Mayor asked builder Dan Pokluda how much he feels a certified inspector would charge for a home inspection. He said anywhere from \$500 - \$750. Dan also said he would prefer if the City went back to the 2009 codes instead of the 2012 codes that are in place.

Currently, the City charges the fees based on the valuation of the home. Crystal Anthony, a West resident feels that we should charge on the square footage. She does not think it is right that two homes with identical square footage should get charged differently. If one home is 2,000 square feet but has upgrades such as granite counter tops and wood floors, it should be the same cost as another 2,000 square foot home with no upgrades.

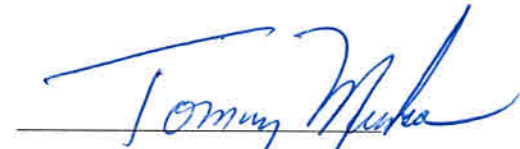
Mayor concluded the meeting by saying that the following items are what we are going to focus on, research, and bring to the table at our next meeting:

1. Put list of fees on the website. Have a list with what the costs includes and does not include.
2. Compare square footage vs. valuation.
3. We also need to make it know that if you have any problems at all, please come to city hall and address them. If we are not aware there is a problem, then it will not be solved!
4. Masonry requirement – currently we are at 75% now, we could possibly lower that percentage or match the area that you are building in.
5. List of inspectors out of Waco and surrounding areas. What are their costs? The City could come up with a list of three approved inspectors and the builder/owner could pick from that list.
6. Comparing 2009 and 2012 Residential Building Codes – what are the pros and cons of both and it is worth it to the citizen's?

On a motion by Steve Vanek and seconded by Cheryl Marak we adjourned at 7:30 pm.



Shelly Nors, City Secretary



Tommy Muska, Mayor