

January 15, 2015

Proceedings of the Special Meeting of the City Council of University Heights, Iowa, held at the City Office, 1004 Melrose Avenue, subject to approval by the Council at a subsequent meeting. ALL VOTES ARE UNANIMOUS UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED.

Mayor From called the January 15, 2015, special meeting of the University Heights City Council to order at 6:01 p.m.

Present: Mayor From. Council Members: Carla Aldrich, Mike Haverkamp, Jim Lane, Silvia Quezada and Virginia Miller. Staff present: Attorney Ballard and Clerk Anderson. Also attending: Tracey Achenbach, Pat Bauer, Mark Patton, Sally Scott, Jane Swails, Larry Wilson and Pat Yeggy.

The council was joined by Sally Scott, Chair of the Johnson County Affordable Homes Coalition, Mark Patton, Executive Director of the Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity and Tracy Achenbach, Executive Director of the Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County. The Johnson County Affordable Homes Coalition advocates for affordable housing in Johnson County. Iowa Valley Habitat for Humanity exists to serve low-income families in Johnson, Cedar, Iowa and Washington counties. The Housing Trust Fund of Johnson County's mission is to promote and support affordable housing in the county. The three have been meeting with various city councils and the Board of Supervisors to see "what is feasible in their areas" and to set some goals for affordable housing.

Scott asked what the priorities of the council are and what could be achieved in the city for low-income housing. She commented that the proposed development on the Flaum property seemed like an interesting opportunity given its large space.

Patton commented that Cook Appraisals to analyze the market and they determined there is a .6% vacancy rate for affordable housing in the area; market forces are not aligning and demand is significantly higher than supply. In University Heights, 32% of renters are paying more than 30% of their income towards rent.

Achenbach asked the council if the community feels pressure when property owners sell to buyers who will rent the property. Scott commented there has been a shift in the number of rental units; in 2000 the ratio was 75% to 25%, owner-occupied to rental, whereas in 2012 the ratio has shifted to 60% to 40%. Council member Miller stated that some streets have seen dramatic shifts in recent years and that has changed the character of the street and how the houses are maintained. Council member Quezada stated the increase in rental properties is creating compliance issues. Council member Haverkamp commented on the University of Iowa's intent to recruit more students and how this will very likely impact the city's rental population. Haverkamp feels that single-family dwellings are the "worst model for rental" and that multi-family units need to be built.

Miller inquired how realistic would it be for the city to get involved in building multi-family units. Scott replied the city could apply for grants if there was no revenue stream. Achenbach stated the city could apply to the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program for assistance to purchase and rehab properties; there is a limit of six houses per community. Patton commented that the Johnson County Board of Supervisors is not bonded to capacity and that money could be used for affordable housing.

Scott asked if the city has had conversations with the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) regarding involvement for low-income housing for their staff. Haverkamp replied he would like to see UIHC and the University of Iowa get involved and would consider a density-bonus for the proposed St. Andrew Church development to include units for low-to moderate income families.

Mayor From asked who the city could work with to established a city housing program. Scott suggested contracting with the Housing Tract Fund or the Housing Fellowship, especially to do the income verification.

Quezada asked what the council should do in the next few years regarding affordable housing for the city. Scott replied the city needs to determine its priorities, be in affordable housing, neighborhood stabilization and the city will want citizen input. Council member Lane stated the city will need to determine how much it can afford to spend on a program and staff to run it. Achenbach stated the city could contact ECOG to assist with a down-payment assistance program.

Larry Wilson commented that renters do not have the incentive to maintain properties in University Heights. Wilson stated there are vulnerable areas in the city for properties becoming rental units and the city needs to preserve what is in place. The city needs to makes a statement about encouraging families to reside in the city. Wilson suggested adding language to the city's Comprehensive Plan about what the expectations would be for the Flaum property and any potential development. The city needs to be pro-active in encouraging and communicating its policy expectations.

The meeting was adjourned by **unanimous consent at 7:12 p.m.**

Attest: Christine Anderson, City Clerk

Approved: Louise A. From, Mayor