

SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2, 2009 AT 6:00 P.M. AT CITY HALL. MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Alton McCollum. COUNCILPERSONS: Bo Griffin, Ella Bamberg, Janeth Walker, Teresa Hannibal, and Nancy Foster. CLERK: Bruce Watson. VISITORS: Ron Shattuck, Sheri Dorey, John Acree, Ricky and Sandy Albertson, Bill and Diane Henegar, Nancy Hiers, Juanita Murdock, Gene Schwarting, Jr., James Banfield, and Phyllis Overstreet.

Mayor McCollum called the meeting to order and Councilperson Foster gave the invocation.

Mayor McCollum informed everyone they were here tonight to conduct a public hearing to receive comments from the public concerning the proposed revised Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance for the Town of Bamberg. He began the public hearing and gave everyone five minutes in which to speak.

Mr. James Banfield, informing Council that his wife had just opened the Christian Book Store downtown and that his daughter had been attacked in the Piggly Wiggly parking lot, told Council there was not enough lighting in the new parking area on Moore Street. He explained that lighting was an issue and informed Council the one light the BPW put up was not adequate.

Mayor McCollum assured Mr. Banfield that he had notified Manager Ellis about the problem who agreed to place two flood lights on the parking lot.

Councilperson Foster informed Council that the Police department needed to ride through the area more often.

Mr. Ron Shattuck informed Council that he lived in the old home on Midway Street and that he was concerned with the section of ordinance creating an Historic Overlay District which called for a Board of Architectural Review. Mr. Shattuck said the wording seemed to be too intrusive. He explained that he was in favor of maintaining the integrity of the Historic District but was concerned with having to get approval from the BAR to decide on the color of his house if the Zoning Ordinance was approved.

Mayor McCollum said he felt the BAR would be reasonable when it came to enforcing the ordinance.

Mr. Shattuck asked if the ordinance would require a house to be painted if it was not presently painted? He voiced that a lot of people would be put off by the bureaucratic intrusion.

Clerk Watson explained that the Building Inspector would use the the Unsafe Building Abatement Code to deal with homes which needed to painted. He said the Historic Overlay Ordinance did not deal with when a house needed to be painted but that the BAR would be involved with the color of paint for the historic home.

Gene Schwarting, Jr., Chairman of the Planning Commission, informed everyone that the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance were developed to protect the citizens and Town of Bamberg. He said they knew it would be an issue and voiced that the Planning Commission did not want more layers of bureaucracy. Mr. Schwarting said the Planning Commission only wanted to preserve the architectural heritage of Bamberg. He explained that there were contributing and noncontributing properties in the area but that the ordinance only dealt with the contributing properties of architectural and cultural importance. Mr. Schwarting said the ordinance was not intrusive due to the appeal process and hardship clauses in the ordinance. He said the ordinance was a way to preserve the historic properties in Bamberg. He said they must start somewhere. Mr. Schwarting said the BAR would be comprised of local citizens who would be lenient.

Mr. Schwarting told the group the ordinance would only be dealing with the outside structure of the homes and referred to the renovation of the McLaurin House presently underway. He said he felt the ordinance was fair and up front and was lenient. Mr. Schwarting said the Planning Commission cared about the pride of Bamberg, the businesses, the stores and especially the Historic District. He voiced the new ordinance would help the economy of Bamberg.

Mrs. Sheri Dorey informed Council that when they came to Bamberg to purchase an old home they asked if there was an oversight committee which they would have to deal with concerning the historic homes. She said they were told an oversight committee did not exist and they really liked that concept. She voiced that they could never be sure who would be serving on the BAR who might be very restrictive. She said it was not right for other citizens to decide what they did with their property.

Mr. Schwarting said they needed to have guidelines in place.

Mr. Shattuck voiced that the uses in the ordinance were not clearly defined. He informed the group that when they were deciding where to locate they looked at other towns who had very restrictive historic districts and they chose Bamberg because it did not. Mr. Shattuck said you don't have to worry about people who buy the historic homes doing anything to jeopardize their value because they love what they are doing.

Mrs. Dorey warned that the restrictive ordinance may actually do the opposite and keep people from buying the old homes.

Mr. Shattuck said the owner of his house used fiber glass pillars in its renovation which may not have been approved by the BAR if the new ordinance had been in place.

Mr. Schwarting said they looked at the positive aspects of the ordinance when they considered the changes.

Mr. Ricky Albertson voiced that he would not have moved to Bamberg if the BAR had been in place.

Mr. Schwarting said there were three mayor issues facing Bamberg which included the schools, health care and quality of life. He said this was a quality of life issue.

Mrs. Diane Henegar asked if the vacant lots in the historic district could have new homes built on them.

Clerk Watson explained that there were no vacant historic lots covered by the ordinance.

Mr. Shattuck asked how swimming pools would be viewed. He said the ordinance even including oversight over landscaping issues.

Mrs. Dorey voiced the new ordinance could be detrimental to the town.

Councilperson Foster asked Mr. Shattuck how he would like it if someone painted the house next to him purple?

Mr. Shattuck said he felt the people investing in the old homes would not be using bad colors.

Councilperson Foster said they had already lost a lot of old homes in Bamberg. She said they just wanted to be sure they didn't lose any more.

Ron Shattuck, Sheri Dorey, John Acree, Ricky and Sandy Albertson all voiced that they would not have purchased homes in Bamberg subject to a BAR.

Mr. John Acree voiced that in five years the members of the BAR could be totally different.

Mrs. Sandy Albertson voiced that it just was not right and that it was unnecessary.

Mrs. Diane Henegar, saying the purpose of the public hearing was for them to say what they thought, asked Council if they were listening. She asked Council if they could change the requirements in the ordinance or was it a done deal.

Mayor McCollum assured her Council was there to listen and then go back to the Planning Commission if necessary.

Mrs. Dorey asked if the property owners could opt out of the historic district.

Councilperson Foster said she did not believe that could be done.

Mrs. Albertson said she had rather see someone take an old home and repair it however they wished in order to save it.

Mrs. Henegar said Council had already destroyed the Historic District by allowing commercial businesses in the old homes.

Mr. Schwarting, telling Mrs. Henegar that she must be referring to the Dowling House, said he would not argue with her about it.

Mr. Bill Henegar voiced that the zoning was changed to allow commercial businesses so someone could make a buck.

Mrs. Henegar said no thought was put into the new ordinance because they should have increased the rooms allowed in a bed and breakfast to six or more as recommended by the Bed and Breakfast Association.

Councilperson Foster assuring the audience they were listening, said she would like to see another public hearing in order to hear more from the public. She voiced that something needed to be done to protect the historic homes.

Mrs. Henegar informed Council that when they purchased the Bamberg House they applied for and received a grant only to be told they needed to replace over 200 spindles which could not be found due to such requirements as in the new ordinance.

Mr. Ron Shattuck and Mrs. Sheri Dorey told Council they moved to Bamberg because they liked the freedoms offered here. They said people would go somewhere else if the ordinance was approved as written.

Mr. John Acree said he felt more people would have attended if a better letter had been written notifying them of the public hearing.

Councilperson Foster made the motion to table the discussion and have another public hearing on January 4th at 6:00 p.m. Councilperson Walker made the second. All approved. The motion carried.

Councilperson Foster thanked Mr. Schwarting for all the hard work he and the Planning Commission had done.

Mayor McCollum, saying it was hard to please everyone, thanked Council and Mr. Schwarting for their hard work.

During the announcements, Councilperson Foster reminded everyone about the open house for the new Christian Book Store to be held on Saturday at 11:00 a.m.

Mrs. Nancy Hiers asked how many members would be serving on the BAR and how long their terms would last?

Clerk Watson said the new ordinance called for five members on the BAR serving four year terms.

Councilperson Walker asked that the new notice to the historic homeowners concerning the next public hearing be spelled out in detail.

Clerk Watson assured her it would.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

ATTEST:

Clerk

Mayor