

City of Falcon Heights
Planning Commission Minutes
19 May 1997

Commissioners Present:

Tom Brace
Alex Hanschen
Wendy Treadwell
Betty Wilcox

Commissioners Absent:

Paul Kuettel
Irene Struck
Wayne Groff (arrived later)

Also Present:

Carla Asleson, Planner
Sue Gehrz, Mayor

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

Approval of planning commission minutes

Commissioner Treadwell moved approval of the minutes from the April 21, 1997 meeting, Commissioner Wilcox seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Groff arrived at 7:03 p.m.

Discussion regarding adoption of a housing code.

Planner Asleson discussed the results of research she'd done regarding routine inspections of multi-family residences. Of the eleven inner-ring suburbs that had this type of program, four cities inspect every unit in the city for housing code conformance, one inspects only the common areas, and six do not do preventative housing code inspections at all. The cities that do housing code inspections find them useful in maintaining the housing stock. However, each of the cities that have comprehensive inspection programs have full-time staff members dedicated to the inspection program and each charges annual license fees to the apartment owners to recoup part of the city's cost to have inspection programs. Given that Falcon Heights already has access to the common areas of apartment buildings via its fire inspections and that the apartment housing stock is in reasonably good condition, Asleson recommended against using a housing code for routine multi-family inspections. If a housing code is adopted and there is a need for annual inspections becomes apparent, there will be the enforcement tools already in place to begin a program at a later time.

The commission then discussed the details of the draft housing code. The commissioners wanted a new definition of the word "cellar", as the proposed definition could be confused with a finished basement. The new definition

should allow habitable space in basements without allowing for "root cellars", or unfinished area below grade with very low ceilings. The requirements for door locks was amended to clarify that only the doors leading directly to a dwelling unit need locks (as opposed to every door in the dwelling unit.)

Commissioner Groff moved to recommend approval of the housing code with the amendments discussed above, with a recommended use as a tool to address housing complaints and concerns rather than for a routine inspection program. Commissioner Hanschen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Adjournment

Commissioner Groff moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Treadwell. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carla Asleson".

Carla Asleson
Planner