

Hokah City Council tables duplex issue

18 HOURS AGO • [BY CLAY SCHULDT / FOR THE HOUSTON COUNTY NEWS](#)

The Hokah City Council on July 7 tabled a request to create a duplex out of a single-family home in a residential part of town.

At the council's May meeting, resident Robert Naleid requested permission to add two living units/apartments to his residence on Ash Street so he could move some friends in. At the following planning commission meeting, City Administrator Rodney Blank told Naleid the council believed Hokah had sufficient apartment properties and his work wasn't needed.

Since that meeting, the planning committee stated anything beyond a duplex would require re-zoning.

At last week's council meeting, Naleid said he has another person living in the home with him who is not yet paying rent but intends to soon, and that he was content to limit the property to a duplex.

Blank explained that a public hearing could be held to apply for a conditional-use permit, but added it would most likely be fruitless, as the council had gone on record saying residential units should only be for single families.

"You can get by with just a renter, but you are not turning it into a triplex," Councilor Jerry Martell said. "We're going to look hard at whatever gets done because we've had enough rental properties already."

"It's a big house, and I would like to rent the upper part of the house, and not just one bedroom," Naleid responded. "I would like to rent it to a husband, his wife (and) a couple kids - a family."

Rita Christianson, who lives next door, said when she purchased her home, she didn't anticipate an apartment complex near her. A multiple dwelling house will bring the property value of her home down, as well as all surrounding property, she said.

Councilor Judy Lonkoski questioned what constituted a family and whether this would extend to cousins, aunts and uncles. The other issue would be the limited parking space on the street if an additional family moved into the neighborhood. Naleid said he had no intentions of changing the property to accommodate parking.

No action was taken on the issue at this time. The council tabled the issue to further review the city ordinances and check with city attorney Skip Wieser to determine whether the property has sufficient square footage to allow for a duplex.

Historic register status

Robert Vogel of Pathfinder, an archaeology and historic preservation firm based in Spring Grove, gave a presentation about beginning the process of getting Hokah City Hall placed on the national register. Pathfinder performs determinations of eligibility for the registry.

In 2006, city hall received eligible status for the register, which is the first step in the process. Two years later, Hokah put the building on request for state funds. It was recommended that by completing the process for the registry, the city could receive partial or total funding for future projects.

“The first thing you need to know about the National Register is it is not some architectural version of the endangered species act,” Vogel said. “The register has no penalties embedded in the law at all. It’s a list that has established criteria for getting on and is used by other agencies to do other things.”

For example, the register is used by the Internal Revenue Service to determine investment tax credits, which in Minnesota is at 40 percent. Local units of government pursue national listing to have access to direct federal and state assistance, as well. In Minnesota, this assistance would come from the Legacy Grant program.

Martell asked whether taking money would put the city under thumb of the federal government, which has requirements which could be a nuisance.

Vogel said the Department of the Interior was too small to enforce extreme requirements on National Register buildings.

“(With) most cities that partner up with these agencies to do historic preservation projects, there tends not to be small time things that come back to haunt you. Generally the parks service runs it straight up,” he said.

Vogel also said the Federal Emergency Management Agency takes its national registry seriously. FEMA is quick to act in the event a register building is threatened.

Lonkoski made a motion to have Pathfinder pursue registry status, which was passed. The application deadline is in August, but Vogel believed there would be enough time to complete the work.

Maintenance

- Allen Kirchoff of the maintenance department reported the lift station pumps went down because mop heads were caught in the works.
- The cleanup from the flooding event two weeks earlier is coming along slowly. Much of the work is being delayed until after the ground dries.
- A manhole on Main Street is in need of replacement. After talking with the state, Kirchoff said regular water shut offs will be installed instead of a manhole.

- A sink hole is developing on corner near St. Peter's Catholic Church. A call from the state was put in, but the city hadn't received a response.

Dike issues

The council discussed the flooding event that occurred over the June 21-23 weekend. Blank said Hokah was affected and one of the problem areas was the rail bed dike that stretches from the water treatment plant to the hill on Minnesota Hwy. 16.

"When it was engineered, MnDOT engineers said this elevation would protect the city and Hwy. 16. The bed was reworked to MnDOT specs and Hwy. 16 flooded a year or two after that, going over the top," Martell said. "Obviously we're going to have to something to get the rail bed up a little higher."

He encouraged the city to begin bidding the project and working with local landowners. In addition, it was suggested that Davy Engineering survey the dike to determine how much coverage material was needed.

"If we build it up, I think we will be OK," he said.

Public nuisances

Two months ago, letters were submitted to properties out of compliance with the Hokah public nuisance ordinance. Last month, it was announced that one property did not receive a letter due to a recent death in the family. Since last month, this property has begun the process of coming under compliance.

In other news

- The city agreed to install a new water meter in a property reporting high water usage — an increase of 10,000 gallons. The new meter would be placed along side the new meter to determine if it is the result of a malfunctioning meter.
- The council went into closed session to discuss the maintenance position step increase.