

P&Z Report – May 25, 2021

The Honorable Michael Kidd
and Members of the City Council
Dallas Center, IA 50063

Dear Mr. Mayor and Members of the Council:

The Dallas Center Plan & Zoning Commission met via Zoom meeting on Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at 6:30 P.M. with the following members participating in the call: Abby Anderson, Thomas Strutt, Daniel Willrich and Matt Ostanik. Kristi Northway was initially not on the call but joined at 6:53 P.M. Kari Boscaljon and Kevin Deaton were not on the call. Also participating were City Attorney Ralph Brown and City Engineer Bob Veenstra.

Public Communications

During the public communications section of our agenda, Bob King, Bob Haxton and Julie Becker all asked to address the Commission. Bob King stated his support for requiring trees in future new developments. Bob Haxton stated that he believes developers should not be required to pay for trees and the City should pay for them instead. Julie asked why P&Z is discussing fence requirements and why in her opinion she has not received an answer about the recent changes to have special use permits approved by the Board of Adjustment. In response to Julie's questions, I stated that the fence topic was raised by City staff as the result of a recently constructed fence and that I have already repeatedly spoken about the special use permit language changes, including during the April and May City Council meetings.

Subdivision Regulations – Street Trees

The Commission reviewed and discussed the updated draft ordinance to require street trees in future new developments. The proposed ordinance has been simplified and improved based on feedback from the Tree Board, local developers and our City Engineer. The Tree Board expressed their support for the ordinance after discussing it in their May meeting. Bob King, Chair of the Healthy Hometown Task Force, has also submitted a letter expressing his support for the proposal.

Kristi Northway joined the meeting during the discussion on this item.

After discussion, Abby Anderson moved and Daniel Willrich seconded to recommend that City Council adopt the proposed street tree ordinance.

The motion was approved 5-0:

- Anderson – Yes
- Northway - Yes
- Strutt – Yes
- Willrich – Yes
- Ostanik - Yes

Requirements for Fences

City Hall recently notified the Commission about a residential fence that had been constructed on the east side of town. While parts of that fence have now been removed, a suggestion was made that the Commission might wish to review the City's existing fence requirements to see if updates should be considered. I then reviewed fence ordinances from eight other nearby cities to see how other communities handle this issue. Based on those examples, I drafted proposed new language which the Commission members then reviewed and discussed.

The proposal would not impact any existing fences in town, only new fences.

The proposed updates would:

- Define permitted and not permitted materials for fences and walls
- Require a building permit for fences and walls, except for privacy panels
- Define when an existing fence does or does not need to be brought into compliance with the new requirements

Commission members had extensive discussion about the proposal. The discussion mostly focused on three considerations:

1. The City's current practice of not requiring building permits for single section privacy panels that abut a house
2. The placement of fence posts and the "finished side" of fences, and whether exceptions should be allowed
3. Permitted materials and whether exceptions should also be allowed to those

The discussion concluded with Commission members agreeing that it would be difficult to allow for exceptions without creating additional complexity. In addition, the language being considered is very similar to what most other nearby cities already require and it seems to work well for those other communities.

No formal action was taken. The Commission will continue discussion and may take action on fence requirements at our June meeting.

Other Business

The Commission discussed and agreed to return to in-person meetings beginning in June.

The Commission looked at the timeline again for the upcoming comprehensive plan update. The City Engineer said that he will plan for discussion about future land use at our June meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Matt Ostanik
P&Z Commission Chair