

**CITY OF FIRCREST**  
**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**TUESDAY, JULY 20, 2015** **COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**6:00 P.M.** **FIRCREST CITY HALL, 115 RAMSDELL STREET**

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**CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL**

Mayor David M. Viafore called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and led the pledge of allegiance. Councilmembers Hunter T. George, Denny Waltier and Jason Medley were present. Councilmembers Matthew Jolibois, Shannon Reynolds and David R. Goodsell were absent. Jolibois arrived at 6:01 P.M. and Goodsell arrived at 6:03 P.M.

**AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

Viafore reported that he returned early from vacation upon hearing that all Councilmembers were going to be in attendance at tonight's meeting. However, due to the fact that not all Councilmembers were in attendance, the Executive Session – to discuss City Manager performance evaluation – would need to be rescheduled to another date.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

Principal Planner Boers provided an overview on proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (Plan). He reported that a grant had been received from the Department of Commerce to help fund the required update and reported that a draft of the amendments was provided to the Department of Commerce in time to close out the grant and comply with the deadline of June 30, 2015. Boers noted that work on the Transportation Element was taking more time than was anticipated but he was hoping that element would be completed in July. He stated the Planning Commission's initial public hearing could most likely be scheduled for August. Boers stated that once a final draft had been prepared that included the Transportation Element, it would be sent to the State for a 60-day review period during which time the Planning Commission would conduct the public hearing(s). He noted that comments received from the Department of Commerce would be reviewed and concluded by stating that any minor changes that occurred by the City during the review period would be provided to the Department of Commerce and before the City Council takes final action on the Plan.

**DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS UPDATE – COTTAGE HOUSING**

Boers gave an overview on proposed amendments to the Development Regulations that were primarily zoning code amendments. He reported that the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations would be considered in tandem during the public hearing process. Boers noted that the Planning Commission, in June, was in agreement with the package of proposed code amendments to the Development Regulations. He noted the Planning Commission spent time on Innovative/Cottage Housing and Floor Area Ratio and were in favor of allowing them in the Golf Club zone and the R-4-C zoning district. Boers noted that under the Growth Management Act and Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies, the City is required to accommodate a certain number of population and housing units by the year 2030. Boers noted that one product that is being looked at is Cottage Housing/Innovative Housing that has been successful in King and Snohomish Counties and reported that some Pierce County cities have adopted Cottage Housing regulations as well. Boers noted that Cottage Housing could be used as an alternative in a couple of zoning districts and described Cottage Housing as follows:

- Medium density infill residential development, around six to eight units per acre
- Enabled under innovative single family land use/zoning codes – innovative, cottage, carriage houses
- Designed to encourage compact, higher quality new, 1, 2, & 3 bedroom homes ranging from 700 – 1500 sf
- Complementary to existing single family housing
- Meets Growth Management objectives – responds to changing household demographics

Boers provided illustrations of the Pine Street Cottage Housing in Seattle, the Greenwood Avenue Cottages in Shoreline, the Ericksen Cottages on Bainbridge Island the Conover Commons Cottages in Redmond and the Danielson Grove Cottages in Kirkland, all showing the use of nicely landscaped central courtyards including common parking located to the rear of the property. Boers indicated the cottages aren't truly affordable all of the time but relatively affordable some of the time because of the size of around 1,000 sf for a typical cottage. Boers stated it is common that the cottages not be allowed to be rented. Boers highlighted the key elements to Cottage Housing and outlined the demographics of who buys Cottage Company homes. Boers described concerns that some cities have expressed when going through the process, and noted there are a few locations in Fircrest where Cottage Housing could be constructed. Boers noted that there hasn't yet been a local market established of cottage housing development. Boers concluded by stating the Cottage Housing developments presented tonight were rigidly constructed, very prescriptive, and utilized a small niche in the market.

Discussion continued as follows:

- It appears that typical Cottage Housing development is scaling down the size of the homes and lots so there is less maintenance to the homeowners
- Location is important
- The cottage style of homes seems to fit on a smaller lot better than a larger sized home on the same sized lot
- Cottages have a certain kind of architectural pinpoint to them
- Missing from the illustrations is what is constructed next to the clustered cottages
- Some of the recently constructed infill houses don't fit into the neighborhoods in Fircrest relative to size and scale
- Perhaps the cottage houses could be utilized individually as infill houses on smaller lots
- Some of the conventional style developments oftentimes just change the color of the homes but use the same architecture, same building product, same proportions and the redundancy loses any character of distinction
- Developers take the risk when they build and the City should be open to allow them to take that risk
- Some developers could develop property that isn't desirable, sticking the community with the leftovers
- Cottage Housing development on portions of the golf course and on the R-4-C property along Orchard could be ideal
- Fircrest needs to figure out a way to lead its future into something that is distinctive of Fircrest
- The addition of Cottage Housing appears to add an option to a zoning district and to pieces of property
- The parameters that need to be set should provide a myriad of options for development, with a defined playing field and make sure it is sustainable for the community in the long run

- A desire to set more standards for all new construction, with high quality development and sustainable housing
- A desire to step up the design requirements so that three-story repetitious walls aren't allowed

**DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS UPDATE – FLOOR AREA RATIO**

Boers noted that the Planning Commission spent a fair amount of time discussing floor area ratio and have agreed upon a recommendation to be discussed during the public hearing. Boers noted that floor area ratio is one more tool in the tool box to control the volume and mass of a home relative to a lot and is intended to prevent someone from building a large house on a small lot. Boers noted that floor area ratio doesn't deal with the quality of the architectural design but gets at volume, bulk and scale of the home. Boers highlighted maps in Fircrest that utilized data from the Pierce County Assessor Treasurer showing existing floor area ratios to provide sample blocks and also showed maps that dealt with 'what ifs' of differing floor area ratios. Boers noted that the Planning Commission was recommending a floor area ratio of .40 that would allow up to a 2,000 sf home on a 5,000 lot in the Residential-6 District and a 3,200 sf home on an 8,000 sf lot in the Residential-4 district. Boers stated that different floor area ratios could be applied to different zoning districts or there could be a sliding scale so that the size of the lot is more closely looked at. Boers concluded by stating if a floor area ratio of 0.40 was adopted, a maximum of 2,000 sf home could be built on a 5,000 sf lot.

Discussion continued as follows:

- The homes in the development at 44<sup>th</sup> and Alameda seem to be built on top of one another and appear larger than 2,000
- The homes in the development at 44<sup>th</sup> and Alameda are desirable to the community, in high demand, and sell for top dollar
- There are a lot of people that don't want yard maintenance and would prefer to have a newly built large home on a small lot
- There are a lot of people that wouldn't mind having a large home built next to theirs
- Some of the lots in the Residential-6 District are larger than 5,000 sf and would allow the construction of an additional home
- There is more dimension than just the size of the home on the lot and the architecture of the development at 44<sup>th</sup> and Alameda creates monotony
- Some of the newly constructed homes on Orchard Street don't have modulation and articulation on the sides that face the street, and that should be a requirement
- There are a large number of lots in the north end greater than 5,000 sf that by allowing a floor area ratio of .40 could create large homes being constructed in neighborhoods with smaller homes on small lots
- There are areas within the City that could accommodate differing floor area ratios
- What controls are there to prevent contractors from building three-story homes that don't fit into the neighborhood
- Consider reducing the height for new infill construction to an average height of homes in the surrounding vicinity
- The Planning Commission's recommendation would limit the size of a home that could be constructed on a lot
- There are no mechanisms in place to stop large homes from being constructed on small lots

- A three-story house with a small footprint could ruin the feel of a neighborhood
- 5,000 sf lots are the new normal for the City
- The City is desirable not because of the architecture but because of its feel, and different people like different development
- Some people want to live in developments with large homes on small lots, small homes on small lots, and large homes on large lots
- Newly constructed infill homes, constructed on small lots, have sold at top dollar
- Some of the newly constructed infill homes are out of scale to the homes in the neighborhood
- Implementing the floor area ratio concept and height restrictions in certain neighborhoods is a first step in a long marathon, but architectural and height standards are what is missing from the code
- What is the definition for a ‘right’ project for a neighborhood

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Jolibois, seconded by George, to adjourn the meeting at 7:34 P.M. Ayes: Jolibois, Goodsell, Viafore, George, Waltier and Medley. Noes: None. Absent: Reynolds. Motion Carried.**



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David M. Viafore, Mayor



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Lisa Keely, City Clerk