

City of Springfield
Work Session Meeting

MINUTES OF THE WORK SESSION MEETING OF
THE SPRINGFIELD CITY COUNCIL HELD
MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2008

The City of Springfield Council met in a work session in the Library Meeting Room, 225 Fifth Street, Springfield, Oregon, on Monday, April 21, 2008 at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Leiken presiding.

ATTENDANCE

Present were Mayor Leiken and Councilors Lundberg, Wylie, Ballew, Ralston, Woodrow and Pishioneri. Also present were City Manager Gino Grimaldi, Assistant City Manager Jeff Towery, City Attorney Joe Leahy, City Recorder Amy Sowa and members of the staff.

Mayor Leiken said there were a lot of people in the audience for this discussion. He announced that Comment Cards were available at the City Recorder's table and noted that tonight's discussion was not a public comment meeting. Council would not be discussing specifically Patrician Mobile Home Park, but mobile home parks as a whole throughout the City. This had been an ongoing discussion since the Glenwood Urban Renewal district was formed several years ago. He was glad the citizens were in attendance tonight and noted the importance of their attendance. He reminded the audience that Council would not be voting or taking any action tonight.

1. Possible City Responses to Mobile/Manufactured Home Park Closure.

Development Services Director Bill Grile presented the staff report on this item. Given the redevelopment occurring in Springfield, it seems inevitable that residents of one or more mobile/manufactured home parks will find themselves facing imminent displacement by the owners of these properties. State law requires mobile/manufactured home park owners to compensate those they displace. Some local governments require additional compensation. At issue here is whether the City Council believes the compensation required by State law is adequate or whether additional mitigating actions should be considered.

The City carries no legal obligation to provide relocation benefits to park residents affected by private closure, but a range of mitigating actions are possible if Council feels that the State requirements do not adequately address the issue. Council discussion about this is necessary in order to determine if local policy needs to be developed and brought back for further consideration.

Staff provides here, in advance of any closure notifications, a range of possible ways the City might, at Council direction, address future park closures. Park residents have become increasingly concerned about the future of their home sites and understanding their rights. Many want to know what resources are available to assist them with relocating their homes or protecting their homes where they are now. At the request of mobile home park residents in Gateway and Glenwood, city staff discussed the possible effects and tenants' rights in Springfield-area parks. Staff provided information on existing resources available to assist residents in addressing future changes.

Public officials at the county and state levels have indicated that there may be additional assistance developed in the future and additional ways of partnering for regional responses to these housing issues. No substantial conversations have occurred at this time. If Council feels the State requirements are inadequate, it may be beneficial to consider a combination of resources and partners and have staff bring back additional information and options for possible local policy development.

Mr. Grile said staff would be happy to take the Comment Cards and talk individually with people that had specific concerns.

Mr. Grimaldi said with the growth of Springfield came pressure on certain properties to face redevelopment. Frequently, those properties included mobile home parks, but could also include apartment complexes. For many years, statutes had been in place that addressed compensation and notice rules for mobile/manufactured home park displacement. More recently, the Oregon legislature revised the statute on that issue. Staff wanted to talk to Council to determine whether or not the State rules on this subject were sufficient, or if the City wanted to take additional steps for mitigation for those facing displacement. The City was under no legal obligation to consider anything besides what State law required. Some cities in Oregon had done more and others had not. That would be a local policy choice by the Council.

Mr. Grimaldi credited Ms. Griesel and Mr. Ko and his staff, for outlining several options for Council consideration. If Council chose to consider some of the options, local partners such as the County or State agencies, could join the City in looking at creative solutions. Staff could come back in the fall to share what they heard from residents and information from additional research based on Council's direction tonight. There could be an opportunity for public comment at that time.

Mayor Leiken welcomed John VanLandingham, Chair of the State's Land Conservation and Development Commission, who was in the audience.

Ms. Griesel continued the presentation. She referred to the eight options that were outlined in the agenda packet, for future mobile home closures. These were options that staff could research further if Council directed. She discussed Option #1: Rely on State Laws and Regulations while responding to direct needs of individual tenants seeking assistance. She explained current State regulations. This option would still allow the City to address individual tenant needs on a case-by-case basis, which was how staff was currently handling requests. Staff also currently referred people to the appropriate State departments to address their concerns.

Councilor Wylie asked what age of a manufactured home couldn't be moved.

Ms. Griesel said the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) standard was 1976. Homes of that age could still be moved, but park owners could limit anything older than 1976. Park owners could allow it if they based their criteria on the condition of the structure. Ms. Griesel discussed Option #2: Provide information to tenants about the availability of suitable mobile home park (MHP) sites to relocate their mobile and manufactured homes. This would build on Option #1 by allowing staff to provide additional information regarding sites available in the area and doing more to assist with the actual relocation. Staff could also connect the citizen with Theresa

Wingard, State representative from the Oregon Housing and Community department. This option would be a little more costly and would take a little more staff time.

Ms. Griesel discussed Option #3: Provide advocacy for affected tenants (such as, staff researching for suitable sites in MHP in this area for relocating tenants or their housing unit; working with the park owner to increase the mandated relocation contribution; and seeing tenants through their relocation process). This option would have staff assisting tenants with the actual relocation. Funding would be needed with this option, so the source for that funding would need to be identified.

Ms. Griesel discussed Option #4: Acquire from dealers, as they become available (through foreclosure, for example) those manufactured homes meeting HUD standards and make them available to displaced tenants to rent or purchase in manufactured home parks where older mobile homes would not be permitted by the owner/operator. There would be costs with this option for purchase of the structures and storage until the unit was sold or rented.

Mayor Leiken asked if federal funds could be used for that purpose.

Mr. Ko said both Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME funds could be used for relocation assistance, including advocacy and actual relocation payments. Purchasing of units would depend on the situation.

Ms. Griesel said urban renewal funds were set aside in the Glenwood area that could be used.

Ms. Griesel discussed Option #5: City could purchase an existing, vacant mobile home park or one with several vacant spaces or assist in a non-profit agency's purchase and then upgrade or expand the park to meet current codes yet allow a range of mobile/manufactured homes to relocate there. The City may want to consider partnering with another agency such as St. Vincent DePaul, since the City had no experience in managing a mobile home park.

Mayor Leiken said it seemed there was a State agency that could come in and help. He asked if there was such an agency that had experts with this type of experience and could provide leadership for a community.

Mr. VanLandingham said for other closures in cities such as Portland, Theresa Wingard with the State had organized an Information Festival that residents were invited to attend. The festival had different agencies and resources, such as people that moved mobile homes. There was also a non-profit, CASA, which worked with community residents to see if the owner and residents could reach an agreement to purchase some parks. That would not work in some cases.

Ms. Griesel said staff could get more information on those resources if Council directed. She reviewed Option #6: City could obtain land on which to develop a new mobile/manufactured home park, assist with developing its infrastructure or sell the land to a developer; and/or have it operated privately or by a non-profit agency. She said a new park had not been developed for thirty years in Springfield, so current development standards would need to be studied and considered. Partnering with other agencies was recommended for this option.

Ms. Griesel discussed Option #7: City could assist in the development of other types of replacement housing. Some alternative housing could include the apartments in the Royal Building. This option would be costly and timely, but could be beneficial for the residents.

Ms. Griesel discussed Option #8: City could directly or in conjunction with a park owner or developer work to provide an additional lump sum cash payment to assist displaced mobile home owners. This would be a lump sum payment above the State requirement. She explained current State requirements and said the City could include an additional payment to the resident for relocation costs.

Mayor Leiken noted that no matter what the City did, they could not change the amount a private developer had to pay for relocation as it was set by State law.

Ms. Griesel said that was correct.

Mayor Leiken said when the State made their changes, they offered the City a very small window to make any changes by ordinance, but there was very little time for the City to act.

Councilor Wylie asked what it cost to move an average double wide.

Ms. Griesel said it would depend on the condition of the home or the distance it was to be moved. She said staff could get some estimates for Councilor Wylie.

Councilor Wylie noted other factors when moving a home, such as landscaping, sheds, gardens, and sidewalks. She would be interested in the figures including all of those costs.

Mr. Grile said sometimes the move was more expensive than the value of the home.

Councilor Ballew asked for information on how they were moved.

Ms. Griesel said she could get that information when she asked about moving costs.

Mr. Grile said some of the possible sources of funding included urban renewal, CDBG and HOME funds.

Councilor Lundberg said Council needed to make the decision on whether or not to participate, and if so, at which level.

Councilor Ralston said he didn't feel it was the City's job to obtain property. He was on the Housing Policy Board and they had dealt with other mobile home park closures and had created a co-op that purchased property to relocate residents and guaranteed the residents that the property wouldn't be sold out from under them. A developer would do what they wanted with their property and the City couldn't tell them what they could do. The City could help residents find low-cost housing and other mobile home parks. He was willing to have City staff assist them with options, but not spend City money for relocation. Because the property owner stood to gain a lot of money, it was incumbent on them to cover the costs. He would think a reasonable property owner would do what they could. The City didn't have additional money to help people move.

Councilor Wylie said Option #4 was interesting if the City had sources of funding to buy the mobile homes. She asked how many vacant sites were in our area. Ms. Griesel said there were quite a few. Councilor Wylie said the City could match up units with vacancies and provide information on moving and setting up the mobile home. There were many things the City could do without spending City funds. A package of resource material could be put together. She said there was nothing the City could do when it was a developer closing their own park, but there was a lot of heartache and perhaps the City's assistance and a resource guide could help make the move more palatable.

Councilor Ralston said creating partnerships where possible was a good idea. Partnering with the developer and using CDBG funds would be fine. He supported providing information to the residents.

Councilor Pishioneri asked if CDBG funds could be used for City staff as advocates.

Mr. Ko said CDBG funds could pay for the entire relocation. In some cases we would be forced to do that. In cases where the City had an arms-length transaction of sale, the City was not obligated, but the City was allowed to use HUD funds to pay staff and consultant time for relocation costs. Some of that was dependent on income level of the resident or the distance they wanted to move. There were certain rules by HUD that needed to be considered. The City had limited CDBG and HOME funds and relocating units could be expensive.

Councilor Pishioneri said citizens had expectations of the City looking out for them, but Council also needed to consider the rest of the City. He didn't feel the City should go into the mobile home business, but could advocate for the mobile homeowners and look for outside funds to assist where possible with the move. Ms. Griesel was going in the right direction, but he didn't want the City to invest in homes and parks.

Councilor Ballew said we needed to move forward slowly. It was a very emotional issue. Part of the hazard of living in that type of development was that it could be sold. The City could be a good informational service, including a website with resources and available sites around the community and resident's rights. She didn't feel the City should duplicate what the State was already doing. There would be some circumstances where assistance was needed, but the City was not in the business of direct social service and needed to be cautious.

Councilor Woodrow said he agreed that the City should assist to whatever degree was possible, but noted that costs were not yet associated with these options. He wanted to make it as painless as possible for everyone. He was interested in learning if CDBG and HUD funds could be used and in what way. He would like information from staff on whether or not it was possible for the City to request that park owners provide an affidavit to people buying a new mobile home or manufactured home and putting it on a rented space, stating that the property could be sold at some point.

Staff will follow-up.

Councilor Wylie said the City needed to have a package of information available to residents with information on eligibility for funding, how to apply, who moves the unit and the costs. She

said it would be nice if the park owner could offer lease to buy options for those residents in the park. She asked if it was legal for the City to require that option for new parks. It could provide protection for the residents in the future.

Mayor Leiken said seeing the faces in the audience made this issue much more personal. This information involved people's lives and where they lived. He said most mobile home parks would not offer a lease to buy option and he didn't think the City could set up an ordinance to require it. Springfield was not the first community that had discussed this subject. He appreciated the work staff had done and asked that they check with other communities in Oregon that had dealt with this issue. He agreed that Council needed to proceed slowly and take their time. It was the City's responsibility to do due diligence on this issue. Other communities had gone through this, such as Roseburg with the closure of Shadow Ranch. We needed to go through this process slowly and listen to the community. Hopefully, they could come up with something constructive that would work for everyone.

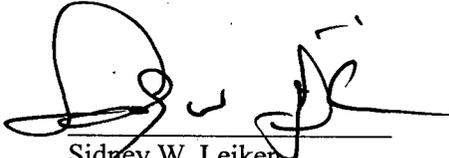
Councilor Lundberg said the City couldn't be advocates against not moving people. The developer owned the property and had the right to do what they wanted within State guidelines. She agreed with everything said tonight and summarized Council's thoughts. Council was interested in assisting and advocating as much as possible and would like to see the numbers for staffing. Council would also like to see the City provide information through an informational packet, referral information, website, and other resources. In using the resources we had, the City needed to partner with other agencies because there were a lot of opportunities. It would not be outside the scope of the purpose of CDBG and HOME funds to prioritize mobile home parks, similar to prioritizing the downtown. Council would like staff to look into the State advocacy and also look at how other communities were addressing this issue, not only what worked, but also what didn't worked. The City needed to think about taking care of people; the City had a moral obligation to assist.

Mr. Grile said staff would do more checking and report back to Council in the fall. Staff would let Council know what park owners and residents had to say.

ADJOURNMENT

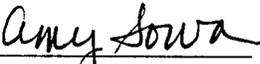
The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Minutes Recorder – Amy Sowa



Sidney W. Leiken
Mayor

Attest:



Amy Sowa
City Recorder