

**CITY OF PRAIRIE CITY
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 18, 2016**

Mayor Alleger called the workshop to order at 6:15 p.m. He noted that the public has had opportunities to speak at prior meetings. As such, he stated that he would not entertain comments or questions from the public.

Present: Mayor Alleger; Councilors: Beiner, Burkett, Downey, Engle, and Kuecker
Also in attendance: City Administrator Martin, City Attorney Judisch, Billing Clerk Voeller, Public Works Employee Samson, Chief Bartello, EMS Director Wenthe, and Building Inspector Jason Van Ausdall

Mayor Alleger introduced Jason VanAusdall, our Building Inspector. VanAusdall began by asking those present to proceed with an open mind. He noted that he, the City Staff, Builders and the Mayor work well as a team and invited the Council to become part of the team. He read a prepared statement that addressed several of the concerns that have been addressed during the last few meetings including fees, inspections, and permits for remodels. He noted that they, V&K, as the Building Permit Department have done no wrong. When asked, Mayor Alleger noted that he spoke with Phil Webb, one of the City's largest builders, who stated that if the City doesn't maintain a building/inspection process individuals seeking federal funds (FHA) to purchase a home would not be able to get financing. Councilor Engle stated that she is in favor of inspections, updated building codes, and property owner's rights. She noted that she is concerned that we seem to be working in an "I got you" environment. Discussion followed on the fact that the council was notified just a few months ago that the building code needed to be updated and it needed to be updated right away. When it appears, from what has been said, that the City Manager (Toribio) knew about this last October (2015). The Council would consider this important and feels that Van Ausdall should have bypassed the normal chain of command and brought it to the Council's attention. Councilor Burkett addressed the fact that he feels our community believes that building permits are not required if you're not changing the footprint. Therefore, most remodels would not require a permit. He further noted that there is more flexibility on how we establish building codes. He noted that we can establish different districts, and the codes can be specific to each district. Councilor Beiner stated that he feels it is everyone's responsibility to come together as a team to educate the public. He suggested that we need to break down the permitting process into layman's terms so that it is easier to understand.

Councilor Kuecker stated that he has also spoken with Phil Webb, and that Webb noted Van Ausdall has been nothing but professional. He then read excerpts from an email from Ljerkaeasi an employee in the Deputy Building Code Commissioner's Office within the Iowa Department of Public Safety. The message was that cities with populations under 15,000 are not required to have a building code enforcement inspection. Local authorities (City) are required to handle zoning issues. Without a building code the residents would only have to worry about permitting where it is required by State Code. These areas include electrical, energy code, plumbing and mechanical permits. The department may come in at any time following a complaint and inspect the work. If the work is noncompliant the State can shut the project down, which can cause costly delays. Kuecker noted that Ljerkaeasi had nothing but positive comments to make about

V&K. She stated it is best to follow the rules from the State and for the City to offer third party inspections. Kuecker does not want to be at the mercy of the State. Kuecker further stated that as an elected official for the City, the Mayor/Council are held to a higher standard. If we witness something that we know goes against what our code requires, we should be informing City Hall or Van Ausdall.

City Administrator Martin informed the Council that Voeller, Van Ausdall, and herself sat down a couple of months ago to go over our procedures. We are all on the same page for the process and the information that is given out from City Hall. She then asked for help from the Council to let the public know that they will get a consistent answer from City Hall, and that they need to call City Hall with their questions.

Billing Clerk Voeller addressed the Council and explained that she has gone through our Citizen Feedback forms back to 2005. She found countless complaints on animal issues, speeding, sidewalks, memorial plants, snow removal, etc., but nothing on building permits or building inspections. She then explained that she research the fee schedule. What she found was that the only time the fee schedule changed between 2012 and now, was January 2014.

PW Employee Samson stated he feels we owe it to future homeowners for them to know that their homes are safe. He further stated that this is achieved through the building permit and inspection process.

Attorney Judisch stated that this is the same building code that we have had in the past. He noted that he has talked with the prior inspector, Denny, who stated that permits were required for remodels. If we learn about a project being done without a permit we should follow up and inform our building inspector.

Van Ausdall, noted things are starting to slow down and that he and his staff will put together information in layman friendly terms that the City can add to the website and have available to handout from City Hall. These will be presented to the Council for their review and approval prior to putting them out to the public.

Following discussion, Council consensus was to have V&K create layman friendly information educating the public on what projects would require a building permit. No additional charges for this service.

Councilor Burkett asked that a committee be set up to review the facts of the building permit policy. Councilors Downey and Beiner agreed to serve on that committee. Attorney Judisch stated that he would look into whether this meeting would need to follow open meeting rules.

V&K Contract: Attorney Judisch stated that the changes to the contract are strictly correcting scrivener errors and it does not require Council action.

Councilor Burkett moved to adjourn the workshop at 8:00 p.m. and return to the special council meeting at Councilor Beiner seconded the motion and on a roll vote, the motion carried unanimously.

Lori Martin