



CITY OF SWEET HOME CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

June 18, 2024, 5:30 PM
Sweet Home City Hall, 3225 Main Street
Sweet Home, OR 97386

Mission Statement

The City of Sweet Home will work to build an economically strong community with an efficient and effective local government that will provide infrastructure and essential services to the citizens we serve. As efficient stewards of the valuable assets available, we will be responsive to the community while planning and preparing for the future.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:32 PM.

Roll Call

PRESENT

Mayor Susan Coleman
President Pro Tem Greg Mahler
Councilor Angelita Sanchez
Councilor Josh Thorstad
Councilor Dave Trask

ABSENT

Councilor Lisa Gourley
Councilor Dylan Richards

STAFF

Kelcey Young, City Manager
Angela Clegg, Tourism & Economic Development Coordinator
Blair Larsen, Community & Economic Development Director
Adam Leisinger, Communications Manager
Cecily Hope Pretty, Administrative Services Director
Robert Snyder, City Attorney

City Council Work Session - Downtown Standards

Mayor Coleman called for a moment of silence to set the tone for the meeting.

Director Larsen provided an overview of proposed categories for consideration related to potential downtown standards. He requested that City Council indicate their support and ideas related to each on their respective paper sheets posted throughout the Council Chambers.

Mayor Coleman stated that her primary concern was the ability of owners to leave their buildings vacant and take advantage of tax benefits.

City Manager Young noted that the City Council indicated little support for fines on vacant buildings and asked if City Council had a preferred method to mitigate vacant buildings. Mayor Coleman stated that the Commercial Exterior Improvement Program (CEIP) had been in place for a long time and had not been a sufficient incentive to prevent many vacant buildings in downtown Sweet Home.

Director Larsen asked City Council how they viewed the role of the City in downtown. Councilor Thorstad stated that he expected leadership but did not support fines.

President Pro Tem Mahler stated that he did not view the City's role as policing vacant buildings but did support hazard mitigation through additional fire and safety inspections.

Mayor Coleman stated that she felt the City's role was to ensure sufficient infrastructure and safety to allow business to thrive. She added that owners who demonstrate active work to improve their buildings should be exempt from penalties.

Councilor Trask expressed support for increased fire safety inspections requirements.

Director Larsen stated that staff could investigate the possibility of an Urban Renewal District. He noted that Sweet Home's property tax compression had kept such a district infeasible in the past. He added that establishing such a district would provide a dedicated source of funding for improvements.

Councilor Sanchez asked if an Urban Renewal District would take revenue away from other taxing entities. Director Larsen replied that for all properties within the district, their taxation levels are frozen at the County level and any taxes collected in excess of that level would go to the district. City Manager Young added that it would not have a negative impact on other taxing entities.

City Manager Young noted that CEIP funding was dwindling so if the City Council wanted to focus on financial incentives, funding options would need to be identified.

Councilor Thorstad expressed support for establishing a business license program with or without fees so that the City would have a consistent opportunity to educate business owners on available programs and code requirements.

Mayor Coleman expressed support for undergrounding lines downtown. Director Larsen stated that new development required undergrounding but existing development was not required to do so. He added that it was very expensive.

President Pro Tem Mahler expressed support for requesting a non-mandatory fire plan from businesses at the time of business licensure.

Councilor Sanchez expressed concern with placing additional regulations and penalties on business owners.

Councilor Sanchez stated that she did not feel it was the government's role to dictate what owners may do with their private property.


Councilor Thorstad expressed support for pursuing additional incentives and requested public input on vacant buildings.

There was a consensus of support to hold additional discussions on demolition by neglect, incentives, business registrations, and vacant buildings.

Mayor Coleman commended local business owners who had made recent improvements downtown and thanked staff for maintaining the CEIP grant.

Adjournment

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 6:49 PM.



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Manager – Ex Officio City Recorder