

**TOWN OF GARFIELD
PLANNING COMMISSION
November 10, 2010**

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Phil Weagraff called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

ROLL CALL: Tammy Howard, Tami Southern, Damon Vassar, Phil Weagraff, and Planning Commission Secretary Annie Pillers. Absent: Paul Hendrickson and Kevin Pickron

GUESTS: Daymon Marple-PDA, Jarrod Pfaff-Mayor, Tim Southern-Councilmember, Andrew Thomas- PDA and Katie Young-PDA.

Minimum Lot Size Square Footage/Minimum House Square Footage:

Daymon Marple noted smaller houses make good sense with energy savings. Guidelines could make it decent housing, some manufactured homes, prefab walls and rafters. He talked about 2 or 3 companies that make these small prebuilt 680 sf to 1,000 sf homes. They are smaller and easier to heat, have less of a tax base that appeals to older people or younger people starting out. He noted there is a trade off for houses big enough for families too. Katie Young thought an 1,100 sf home is ideal for families and gets kids in the school. Daymon noted the PDA is still working with Craig VanTine at COAST on a van pool.

Daymon said the small homes are affordable to build, easy to heat and cool, and can be green. He talked about USDA grants for low energy use homes. He referred to the solar panels on the roof at Camas Winery reducing their power usage by 20%. USDA assisted with the financing. He felt these new manufactured homes were better than some of the existing older homes in town. He talked about the house at the RV Park that is super insulated and looks good.

Katie Young indicated she was not sure there was a lot of demand for smaller homes and did not see evidence that older neighbors were looking to leave their homes for smaller homes. She agreed a 600 sf home was cool, but more likely in Pullman or Moscow.

Andrew Thomas said the first factor to consider is the housing market is contingent upon Pullman and Moscow. With that said, the key is to focus on bringing in families out of Moscow and Pullman, not extravagant, not low income. Housing brings in property tax revenue and makes people who live there better off, raising the quality of life.

Daymon Marple said he did not think everyone would do smaller housing, but he would just like the option to do so. He talked about the 100 acres on the edge where his mom lives that could be developed into large homes, small homes, scattering a bit. He talked about looking at total costs and having some that are affordable. Not everyone has the capital to get started in Pullman at \$200,000. In Garfield you could afford smaller homes. As you have children, you move on to the next step. He mentioned \$78,000 double-wide manufactured homes with ac, good sense windows that are nice for the price. He said for expansion wise in Garfield, there is the Motley development and that no one would build next to the water tower. He mentioned putting in something like 600 sf / 800 sf homes on a cul de sac. PDA has talked about building with loans and getting some cash flow to help development in Garfield.

Phil Weagraff mentioned the Debbie Mitzimberg habitat for humanity house stick built home that is 900 sf. It's on a small lot and there are 2 there side by side. Andrew Thomas said the key here is the type of standard of construction that is applied. Singlewides that are not durable are problematic for the community. There was discussion of similar house values for a residential area. Andrew Thomas said there's some debate about the monoculture approach. The expectation is for 1,500 to 2,000 sf houses. The town is currently diverse and when developing it is wise to have variety. Continue with that model – 5 smaller, 2 medium, 5 larger ones – and does not adversely influence house price values. A mixed model is attractive. If putting in 1 set of housing, geared towards younger families, sets up a problem for development. There is no market for it. There's a better chance if mixed. Daymon noted when he had property in Moscow there were covenants that required a certain square footage, trees, sidewalks, etc. – that demanded a lot of things.

Mayor Pfaff said when the code was changed to the 1,000 sf size home, that was done very specifically and cleaned the town up very quickly. He understands the PDA needs cash flow and if the PDA already had traded ground with Motley and had title, he could see zoning that section for that. He said he was leery about zoning for smaller homes all throughout town. He said at the same time they also put in the 5 year minimum age requirement. He noted Forrest Miller, who used to be head of TRICO, a non-profit designed for economic development, said not a single small square footage housing project they ever helped get going worked. He only knows of 2 that worked and they had covenants galore. They were all single people or elderly couples. It was noted covenants could be adopted but then it becomes an enforcement issue since you don't want them to turn into dilapidated housing in 5 years. Mayor Pfaff said he would prefer to see the focus on developing duplexes.

Andrew Thomas said he thought there might be a miscommunication here, it's not necessarily smaller housing but in terms of managing. Covenants are not wise and do not match the community. People here want to be left alone and to do what they want to do. A new development sets parameters that facilitate development to prevent dilapidation. Stick built is probably in a better state. Need to permit the proper type of development and the key is flexibility. Adopt a broadly based flexible plan. React to specific demands and dealing with each person as they come is significant. Dale Miller with CAC says most people want a minimum 1,100 sf home with options to add on as a family grows.

Katie Young shared they moved here with their daughter to go to school. She did not see retired people moving to town, noting they would not move here without services. Daymon Marple cited examples of retired people moving back from the ranch or farm to town, such as the Pfaffs and Westacotts.

There was discussion of resale value for smaller homes. Mayor Pfaff said that was the reason mother-in-law cottages were turned down, having a whole lot with a 500 sf home on it when the person dies.

Andrew Thomas suggested taking a really long-term approach in the analysis. The present real estate market is pretty abhorrent. What will the market be like in 25 years? Would a small place be feasible under different market conditions? 1990 was a more stable time, Pullman wasn't so grossly over priced, there was less turmoil. This is an interrupted point in time and not reflective of what will likely occur in the future.

Mayor Pfaff told the commission, if they choose to make a change, they should reach their decision on their own. He didn't want them to make a change just because he and Tim Southern were there, noting they were their own board. He said if they do make a change, he would hope they would have good guidelines. Phil Weagraff said this meeting was for all and he honestly wanted to hear what they had to say. Katie Young said there was time to do more research and no need to make a decision this minute.

Andrew Thomas asked if it was possible to appeal the zoning standard. Tammy Howard said not at this time. Andrew talked about flexibility and some amount of discretion. Regarding flexibility, there was some concern expressed about liability, if do for one but not for another.

Tammy Howard asked Daymon if these kit homes come in 900 to 1,000 sf and he said yes. Daymon said the PDA wanted to help facility business and more people in town. The model shows 800 people needed to keep services flowing, 600 is on edge of keeping town alive. He said the cabin homes are more than adequate for young couples or single people. A covenant could require a carport. There are grants for solar energy. He agreed they did not have to decide today, but put some thought towards it. He said the idea was not to make homes \$200,000. Katie Young thought some of the most popular housing was a 2 or 3 bedroom 950 to 1,000 sf stick home or modular kit. She said smaller homes are harder to rent. Mayor Pfaff said if this was just the PDA, it would be a different discussion.

Damon Vassar asked about the cost difference between 700 sf vs 900 sf. Andrew Thomas compared the price of modular units well over 1,000 sf to smaller kits, then you add in the cost of town utilities. He said realistically the price between small and traditional mid-range housing is non-existent. If a person can buy a larger house they will do so. Getting the most bang for the buck will drive peoples' decision. Land is cheaper here. There's been lots of discussion on energy efficiency and this is also geared to retrofitting older homes. New homes are cost efficient. Need to find way to retro fit older homes to be cost efficient.

Mobile/Manufactured Home Age Requirements:

The commission discussed the current requirement that mobile and manufactured homes be no more than 5 years. Suggested changes included 7 years, 10 years, and 15 years. It was pointed out that financing on older mobile/manufacture homes is difficult and often 15 years is the range for collateral.

It was noted the PDA, through HUD could get repossessed homes, that could be used for cash flow. It has to be a government entity to be eligible for some of these programs. Right now there are no HUD homes available in Garfield under this program.

Tami Southern mentioned abandoned houses, where they have an owner but no one is doing anything with them. She asked if they sit vacant, can the town require they be taken down. Mayor Pfaff said in talking with Stephen Bishop, there is no solid answer on this. Other ideas mentioned included contacting the health department or using the nuisance ordinance. It was noted the issue is properties that are not well maintained and what the town can do about this. The guests left the meeting at 8:05 pm.

Minimum Lot Size Square Footage/Minimum House Square Footage (Continued):

Tammy Howard said she was not opposed to having some smaller houses in town, if there was a need for that. She did not think it was wise to have smaller homes on a 10,000 sf lot. If a person wanted a smaller home, they would not want a big yard to have to take care of then. She thought against having a smaller house size development in the new area by water tower.

Phil Weagraff was content with reducing the size to make it viable to fit someone's need. Tami Southern noted you can build a 1,000 sf home now but it's not being done and asked if there really is a need. She understood the need for a size variance. Phil said his focus was the potential benefit for sustaining the town, make it appealing with more services for families to come and people to benefit from. Tami Southern said if something was being set up for a retirement community, that may be okay.

Phil noted there is not much more cost when going a little bit bigger. The hook-up costs are still where a lot of the cost is. He personally would not want to go lower than 850 sf, so what is a 150 sf? \$10,000. Tammy Howard did see any reason to change the current situation on any of them. Damon Vassar agreed not to mess with the lot sizes. He said the square footage requirement should not be lower than 850 sf. Phil Weagraff thought there was enough available housing in town right now.

It was decided without any current projects pending or any requests submitted, no changes would be made to the square foot requirements for house sizes or lot sizes.

Home occupation: Annie Pillers asked for clarification on the home occupation conditional use permit. The commission talked about whether the home occupation was registered as a business with the state, was the person making a living from the home occupation, was the person hiring people or not, and any possible impact on neighbors. Examples cited as low impact were hair cutting or photo studios. It was agreed to continue the current practice.

Comprehensive Plan: In general, the commission said they were done reviewing the comp plan. Annie Pillers would send the commission the latest copy along with a copy of the capital improvements plan being developed by council. It was thought updating the capital improvements list in the comp plan would help determine what is lacking in direction.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Tammy Howard **MOVED** the minutes of September 30, 2010, be approved as written. Damon Vassar seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING: January 5, 2011, 7:00 PM. **ADJOURNMENT:** Chairman Weagraff adjourned the meeting at 8:40 pm.

APPROVED: _____ **Phil Weagraff, Chairman**

ATTEST: _____ **Annie Pillers, Clerk/Treasurer**