

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – WORK SESSION
Webster City, Iowa March 29, 2017

The City Council met in a special Work Session at the City Hall, Webster City, Iowa at 6:00 p.m. on March 29, 2017, upon call of the Mayor and the advance agenda.

1. The meeting was called to order by Mayor John Hawkins and roll being called there were present John Hawkins, Mayor in the chair, and the following Council Members: Matt McKinney, Brian Miller, Jim Talbot and Logan Welch.
2. It was moved by McKinney and seconded by Miller to approve the agenda.
ROLL CALL: Hawkins, McKinney, Miller, Talbot and Welch voting aye.
3. Mayor John Hawkins led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Also in attendance were City Manager Daniel Ortiz-Hernandez, City Clerk Karyl Bonjour and City Attorney Zach Chizek. Adri Sietstra and Pat Powers were there for media representation and there were several members from the public in the audience as well.

4. The purpose of the Work Session was for Council to address Unsafe Buildings, Nuisance Properties, City Code and Procedures. Mayor Hawkins asked City Manager Ortiz-Hernandez to give an update on the property located by the Grid Iron Restaurant Bar and Grill. The City has been in contact with the attorney for the property owner and are awaiting a return call before any further action can be taken at this time. It appears that some of the garbage has been removed, but doors are still open and very much of an eyesore. The possibility of treating it as an attractive nuisance and barricading or fencing off the area was discussed.

City Manager Ortiz-Hernandez then went over the process the City follows for nuisance properties and unsafe buildings as each are handled a bit differently. He informed that our City Code is no different than what other cities have and all are structured by the State Code. Currently the City has one employee that is doing all the inspections and code enforcement. Council discussed ways to help alleviate this workload and also shorten up the “reasonable time frame” as stated in the current City Code. Council Member Miller suggested adding more concrete nuisance definitions to the Ordinance to make sure they will hold up if a case is taken to court.

City Attorney Chizek suggested the city have a plan to try to obtain possession of unsafe or abandoned properties and do one area of the city at a time. By taking ownership of the properties through the proper procedures and demolishing multiple dwellings at one time, a lower bid may be obtained and an impact that the city is acting on this issue will be expressed.

Items discussed were the possibility of Police issuing warnings to the property owners if they notice garbage or other nuisances while out patrolling and the Inspection Department following up on the warnings with the required letter of notification. Possibly posting signs regarding the property being unsafe could be a measure used as well. It was requested that the City communicate with the public the status of the properties being addressed and what has been done to date, otherwise they have no information that the City is working on the complaints.

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Council Members want to put more “bite” into the City Ordinance where it is allowed. Fines are established by the State Code, but time frames can be altered as well as other more specific items can be added and deemed as nuisances. Council Member Welch commented that treating all nuisances and unsafe buildings equal across the board and being consistent in enforcing the current Ordinance in place will show the community the Council is serious about this matter. City Manager Ortiz-Hernandez and City Attorney Chizek will go to work with staff and put on paper the changes based on the suggestions and recommendations from the Work Session. The changes will be brought back to Council to review. Council can then decide to move forward with changing the ordinance or discuss other items the Council would like to see changed.

It was moved by Miller and seconded by Talbot that the Council adjourn.

ROLL CALL: McKinney, Miller, Talbot, Welch and Hawkins voting aye.

The March 29, 2017 special Work Session stood adjourned at 7:44 p.m.