

Meeting Minutes

Boulder Town Planning Commission

September 10, 2009, 7:00 p.m.

Commissioners present included Ray Gardner (acting chair), BJ Orozco and Tom Jerome. Brian Dick and Bobbie Cleave were absent. Also present were Commission Clerk, Peg Smith; and Sergio Femenias. Ray moved to approve the August 13 minutes; Tom seconded the motion, and all approved.

Review and discuss town survey questions

Commissioners discussed town survey concepts:

Ray: We shouldn't shy away from public opinion in gathering current data and shaping ordinances to reflect that data. Some of the questions from the last survey seemed slanted to produce a particular outcome, and we should avoid that.

Tom: I'd like to review the 2004 town survey questions as well as its structure, and look at areas that seem important to Boulder; are those topics adequately addressed, such as housing, cluster development, agriculture versus other types of business, development issues, etc.

BJ: Some of the then-current events of 2004 should be brought up to date in terms of current opinions.

General ideas for opinions to be gathered:

- Boulder as an agricultural center; promoting ag
- Communication--- do people feel adequately informed; how many people use email or website to receive information?
- Promoting business developing in general, for or against; employment opportunities; light industry
- Education; charter schools
- Renovating town hall; general infrastructure questions such as roads, water delivery, fire protection, etc.
- Recycling
- Annexation of Black Mesa and Draw
- Upgrading town cemetery

Commissioners agreed to include a way to rank and weigh the responses. Tom said some of the questions would need to be framed such that respondents can indicate their view of the topic's importance as well as its urgency -- two different things.

The plan to proceed is to evaluate the general coverage of questions and look for areas not being covered. Some of the 2004 questions should be carried forward in order to weigh current opinion against that of six years ago. Some questions can be open-ended, enabling respondents to fill in their own feelings.

Ray suggested turning a rough draft of the categories back to the Town Council for their input. Once we're all comfortable with the scope of the questionnaire, we can fine tune the questions. Peg suggested that once the questions are worded, it would be important to pre-test the survey on real people, looking for unforeseen bias or difficult wording, and see how long it takes to answer.

Commissioners generally agreed that anonymity would be important, but that the survey delivery itself needs to be controlled in some manner. BJ thought it would be important to reach everyone. Tom agreed but added that the people most likely to answer the survey are most likely to be interested in town stuff.

Peg will find out if the county will help again with compiling data. The commissioners will start emailing each other with category suggestions and start plugging in questions.

Discuss Town Council decision on use of composting toilets

Tom and Bobbie attended the Sept 3 town meeting at which the subject was discussed. At that meeting, Tom briefed the council on the results of their August 31 special meeting: how the Planning Commission had been approached by someone who wanted to install a composting toilet on their premises, that he had researched online and found nothing specific in state statutes on composting toilets. He had talked to Brian Palmer, of Southwest Public Health, and was told that “in theory, yes,” there are parts of the state they are being used without problem, including Wayne County. Assuming compliance with state code, composting toilets alone are not an issue. Neither is gray water (water from showers, tubs, washing machines), as a new gray water code was approved at the state level as of May 1, 2009. The real problem is black water, which is all waste water from kitchen sinks, photo labs, garage drainage, and flush toilets. The Planning Commission was looking for town guidance as to whether they want the Commission to draft any additional language into the town ordinances.

The town decided that it was unnecessary. If SWPH says such toilets are valid and can be covered in their regulations, the inspection is really their problem. Judi took the action item of adding a statement in the town’s building permit application stating that composting toilets need to meet the specific requirements.

In this week’s discussion, Ray asked about the safety concerns of disposing of solid waste. Tom said that Wendell is the general “enforcer” of town ordinances. In as much as regular septic systems are periodically checked on, presumably so too would be composting toilet systems. BJ said it would be in a person’s own best interests that their system is working properly. Tom thought that the recommended 5-year septic tank pumping probably isn’t rigorously performed or monitored. Ray said he would be interested in knowing how each applicant for a composting toilet would plan to dispose of the waste material. That would be the main concern.

Tom reported that the Town Council is looking to Blake’s case as a test case and modifications, if needed, would proceed from there.

Next Meeting

- Survey questions
- Time of meetings? How about April through August only, 8 p.m.?

Tom moved to adjourn, BJ seconded, all approved. Ray adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.

Peg Smith, Planning Commission Clerk | Date

Approved: _____ Date: _____