

MINUTES OF THE HOUSING, PLANNING, & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
May 27, 2020
Online Broadcast Meeting

Present: Councilmembers Shachner, Kepple, Rader

Also Present: Councilmember Bullock, Mayor George, Chief Dunphy, Chief Malley, Assistant Director Swallow, Acting Director Milius, Commissioner Meyers, Allison Hennie & David Baas of the Planning Department, a couple members of the public, & Clerk Bach

Start time: 5:30 p.m.

AGENDA

Approval of the minutes of the May 19, 2020 Housing, Planning, & Development committee meeting

Chairman Shachner made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Rader to approve the minutes.

A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Yeas – Kepple, Rader, Shachner

Nays – None

Motion passed. The minutes were approved.

Communication from Councilmembers Bullock, Kepple, & Shachner regarding permitting parklets as a tool for economic relief for Lakewood businesses. (Referred to HPD 5/18/20)

Chairman Shachner gave an overview of the meeting and what steps he anticipates moving forward. He expressed a desire to start the conversation regarding parklets. He noted the importance of safety when considering their implementation. He highlighted the importance of providing as much space as possible in restaurants to avoid creating environments that culture COVID-19 infections. He alluded to various physical examples of parklets provided by Mayor George prior to the meeting.

Councilmember Kepple discussed concerns over parking. Referring to data collected by the Better Block Foundation, she noted that in Chicago, 80% of the businesses that added parklets saw an increase in foot traffic and more spending. A parklet holds 8-10 people compared to an empty car in a parking space.

Chairman Shachner spoke to the balance that needs to be struck with Lakewood being an inner ring suburb, juggling the need to accommodate visitors to the community while taking into account Lakewood's walkability for current residents.

Councilmember Rader noted the possibility to help businesses with this tool and the public health benefits that come with getting people outside. He asked that considerations be made for public transit and accessibility for those with disabilities.

Councilmember Kepple proposed including 15-minute drop off/pick up spots with parklets, to promote retail shopping among other things.

Councilmember Bullock stated that parklets are an alternative to curb bump outs, which are more costly. He also highlighted the difference between private and public parklets.

Chairman Shachner asked Mayor George how the administration would like Council to tailor its research on the topic of parklets. Mayor George stated that the important research questions are “What are our goals?”, “What does a successful implementation of parklets look like?”, and “What kind of parklet do we envision for our community?”

Acting Director Milius noted that staff have been looking at what the city can do to receive county and federal funds to help with the idea. Research is being done on liability and approval processes.

Chairman Shachner asked if any business has submitted plans for anything resembling a parklet. Acting Director Milius indicated that the owner of LBM proposed closing off the entirety of Lark St., which is next to his business. She noted it needs more study and neighborhood discussion. A couple business have proposed closing off sidewalks and rerouting foot traffic down the streets. No parklet plans have been proposed.

Chairman Shachner asked about the timeline and processes needed to get parklets implemented in the city. Ms. Hennie indicated that Council needs to determine a vision for the parklets and whether they want them to be a true public or private amenity. Chairman Shachner indicated that he would poll Councilmembers on the matter, but indicated that he and some others envisioned it as a private amenity due to a scarcity of funds on the public side currently. Councilmembers Kepple, Rader, & Bullock concurred. Ms. Hennie noted that a privately funded barrier would cost anywhere in the range of \$10,000 to \$30,000. Councilmembers Bullock and Kepple noted the cost of a permanent structure, but expressed the need for a pilot program with temporary structures that would be less expensive.

Mayor George stated that the administration is open to temporary structures, but noted that the cost will be on the parklet host. She also posed questions to Council on the implementation of private parklets, such as the costs associated with purchasing the parking space, maintenance, etc. Councilmember Bullock stated that he believes the city should be a co-sponsor of the costs with businesses. He suggested using CDBG economic development funds to buy temporary barriers for businesses.

Director Milius encouraged Council to have conversations with a variety of businesses along the commercial corridors besides restaurants. The city has received many requests for designated parking spaces/pick up and drops off zones in front of retail businesses. It was also noted that parklets often take up 2-3 parking spaces.

Chairman Shachner asked Chief Dunphy what process his department would go through in order to determine parklets are safe. Chief Dunphy indicated that typically there is a set of guidelines (the Fire Code) to apply to each application that arises. He noted that part of the problem would be creating guidelines tailored to Lakewood. The Fire Department would focus on the life safety aspect of parklets.

Councilmember Rader proposed including the Planning Commission and Architectural Board of Review on each permitting process to get more eyes on each application.

Public Comment - Mary from the corner of Madison & Lark – She stated concern about implementing parklets where bars and restaurants already have an outdoor patio/dining space, which would decrease walkability and the ability to social distance. She highlighted the importance of ADA compliance. She said a pilot program should be implemented on side streets before main corridors and was not supportive of permanent structures, which could cause issues with snow removal.

Mayor George recapped the discussion, noting that it appears Council and the administration are in agreement to pursue private, temporary parklets that would be allowed through the end of October. The guidelines for them would be similar to the city of Dallas. Councilmembers Shachner, Rader, & Bullock concurred.

Mayor George asked Council to commit to looking through the city of Dallas' temporary parklet permit guide and adding/removing to it to best fit Lakewood. Chairman Shachner agreed to collaborate.

Timelines for comment completion were discussed and a loose date of June 8th was set. Councilmember Kepple requested that some discussion be had on the matter at the Small Business Taskforce's upcoming meeting.

Without objection, Councilmember Shachner adjourned the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.