

Meeting Agenda of the City and Borough of Juneau
Title 49 Committee of the Planning Commission

Wednesday, September 20, 2017
Community Development Department, Large Conference Room
3:15 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Members Present:

Dan Miller, Paul Voelckers, Dan Hickok (Alternate)

Members Absent:

Carl Greene, Kirsten Shelton

Staff Present:

Laura Boyce (CDD), Beth McKibben (CDD), Rob Steedle (CDD), Marjorie Hamburger (CDD)

Public Present:

I) Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 3:21 pm.

II) Approval of Minutes

August 16, 2017 Draft Minutes

MOTION: *by Mr. Hickok to approve the August 16, 2017 minutes.*

The motion passed with no objection.

III) Agenda Topics

a) Language for Nonconformities

Ms. McKibben explained that document before the committee was a patchwork of concepts - some from existing code, some from Homer and Anchorage and Portland, OR. There are a number of categories and processes for nonconforming situations. A nonconforming situation could be any one or a combination of these things.

Is it the intent of these meetings to convert this document into Title 49 language, asked Mr. Voelckers? We will plan to repeal and replace from 49.30.500, said Ms. McKibben, rather than try to amend what we have. The idea is to put in new language. We also want to provide a process to determine legally nonconforming status and we need to discuss which decisions can be done administratively or need to happen through the Planning Commission process.

Discussion of Proof of Nonconforming Situation (Lines 33-80)

Mr. Steedle said this puts the burden on the applicant or the property owner to demonstrate nonconforming status and there is not a definition of this at present.

What about the purchase of the triplex on Sixth Street recently, does this situation apply, asked Mr. Hickok? Did the bank not get confirmation on the legally nonconforming status? So we don't know if the buyer made the

purchase of the building considered as nonconforming, asked Mr. Hickok. I don't know, said Ms. McKibben. He may have found a workaround with owner financing, said Mr. Voelckers. But this language we are drafting could provide a process for an owner to show us, in the future, said Ms. McKibben.

Lines 37, Option A and Option B present an option for whose decision it should be. Mr. Hickok asked what the director wants. Mr. Steedle said he did not have an opinion but thinks this determination could be handled administratively. Mr. Voelckers said he liked having it be a director decision with the option for an appeal to the Planning Commission or if the determination gets too complicated. Mr. Steedle says he would rather keep the noise away from the Planning Commission and direct things to them that are necessary only. It is also cleaner if things happen at the director level, said Mr. Voelckers. But something can be said for making decisions in the public eye, said Mr. Steedle. This could be where the appeal comes in if the neighbors are unhappy, for example.

We have tried to make it a trend for more applications to be approved at the director level, said Ms. McKibben. We are trying to be more responsive.

Ms. McKibben said the language concerning evidence of nonconformity is borrowed from other code, and she thinks it is pretty good. There is in this document a lot of clarifying language that is not currently in our code, such as on Line 63 (Ownership). Other language here is not addressed in our code but she thinks is useful such as Line 69 (Change to conditional use). We have the opportunity to talk about maintenance (Line 73). Do we need to define it, asked Ms. McKibben? I put in some language borrowed from Anchorage, she said. She has not talked to building official yet but thinks it would be good to run this language by him.

Mr. Miller said there can be a situation, for example rebuilding a staircase where the stairs could be built to the new standards even though the building as a whole is nonconforming. Do you think we should have language here about such a situation, asked Ms. McKibben? I think most people would want or need to do this when replacing their staircase but doing so might affect the nonconforming status of their building, replied Mr. Miller. You are correct, said Ms. McKibben, if a building owner was going to reconstruct stairs, this should be done to code, and so should we say here that repair or maintenance should be done to code? I think it is implicit, said Mr. Steedle, and a building official would determine this requirement so it is not needed to be spelled out here. Mr. Voelckers said he likes the last section (Lines 75-80) where it says fixing a rotten stair, for example, does not interfere with nonconforming status. However, while it mentions a percentage, it is not specific about the 10 percent. What if someone breaks a project into smaller chunks and has ten 10% projects? This is of concern, said Mr. Voelckers.

Discussion of Nonconforming Lots and Lot Fragments in ??? Zones (Lines 82-113)

I think nonconforming status should not be specific to a particular zone but borough wide, said Ms. McKibben. Mr. Voelckers said the first sentence in this section (line 84-85) should be broader. Mr. Miller asked about Line 86. Wouldn't a lot already have gone through the land use review process to establish use and so it wouldn't have to meet a minimum lot size if it is determined to be nonconforming? Ms. Boyce could not recall a specific use that requires a specific land size (minimum lot size requirement). Ms. McKibben said that in Homer there was a minimum lot size for use, but Juneau doesn't have one so this could be eliminated in that sentence. Mr. Voelckers agreed.

Regarding district standards, Juneau does not have any so this can be taken out said Ms. McKibben. Basically we can keep the same policy we have now - if you can meet all the requirements. And the lot needs to go through the process of determining that it is legally nonconforming, said Ms. McKibben. It might be that for different categories of nonconforming, some are determined administratively while others are brought before the Planning Commission.

Ms. McKibben said that Line 92 contains a concept staff suggests - that lots sharing ownership must be combined into one lot. Should the language say one conforming lot, asked Mr. Voelckers? What if there are five lots? Does the committee want to consider when nonconforming lots have common ownership that the lots should be required to be combined, asked Ms. McKibben? North Douglas Highway and 9 Mile Road is an example, said Ms. Boyce. Is there anything external to this section that says a legally nonconforming lot can have a house on it, asked Mr. Voelckers? Yes, said Ms. McKibben, and if you want to make this come forward there is merit. She suggested committee members think about it.

In the Casey Shattuck area, an owner could have two nonconforming lots and today could build two houses, one on each lot, said Mr. Steedle. But the rub is that we want to encourage the development of more housing, he said, and so if code requires the owner to combine the two lots and then only be able to build one house, that is in conflict. Mr. Voelckers said that if someone can meet setbacks, we have had the attitude to allow for a build and sometimes give a variance regarding the setbacks. Ms. McKibben said all this is fine, but it is a discussion we need to have. Ms. McKibben recalled a property owner of 4 legal lots on Douglas Island, with one single family home w/accessory apartment. But with a density change, the 4 lots only have one tax id number and one parcel number which is of concern to the CBJ assessors.

Ms. McKibben suggested removing "must be" in Line 94- keep the language simple. She next suggested taking out everything after the "OR". Commissioners agreed saying that less is more.

Ms. McKibben said that Line 96 is a concept from existing code. Mr. Miller questioned the 75% replacement cost concept. He said what if something happens and the house is destroyed to 76%, why shouldn't the owner be allowed to rebuild if they are willing and have the money? He said he does not see the reason. If an unintentional event happened and they want to rebuild, even if it might cost 120% of the replacement cost, why not allow them to do that if it was a legally nonconforming use? Mr. Miller was also concerned with the definition of catastrophic damage. He said he has been in situations where an owner sets out to replace a window and then discovers a ton of rot. This is a catastrophic event although initially was simply considered "maintenance", said Mr. Miller. Stepping away from the discussion of percentage, said Ms. McKibben, we want nonconformities to go away over time and be replaced with things that conform. This code provides more opportunities to extend nonconforming situations. But that is the concept behind percentages. Committee members might want to think about this as we go though, said Ms. McKibben.

Mr. Miller said that in the neighborhoods downtown, for example, with nonconforming use, these lots and buildings are completely a part of the fabric of the neighborhood. Mr. Voelckers agreed but reminded members that with the Planning Commission's reworking of the zoning in these historic neighborhoods, whole swaths of nonconforming situations might disappear. If we get the underlying zoning right, then there will be less need for nonconforming determinations, he said.

Ms. McKibben said a home that unintentionally burns to the ground could be rebuilt, according to this language. But poor maintenance would not be supported.

Do we need to say explicitly (Line 97) that something can be rebuilt, asked Mr. Voelckers? The language implies this for a catastrophic situation but maybe it is not explicit. Mr. Voelckers said his point regarding Lines 96-97 is that it talks about structures destroyed due to a reason other than a catastrophic one. But the language does not address what is allowed if it is. Mr. Miller suggested it should say if it IS a fire. The word "other" is what is wrong, said Mr. Voelckers. Take out the word "other" and add "such as". If there is a shed or garage, could they

rebuild that, asked Mr. Hickok? Yes, that is current code, said Ms. McKibben, but the committee may want to think about that.

Mr. Steedle said we need to get back to the point about percentage brought up by Mr. Miller. The Alternative Development Overlay District (ADOD) is only temporary, but it would not have helped Trinity Church. Lines 96-97 do not cite a percentage, is this correct asked Mr. Miller? Lines 103-104 discuss intentional damage and I am ok with the percentage there, said Mr. Miller.

Line 103 concerns intentionally damaged dwellings; everyone is fine with this said Ms. McKibben. What about negligence, when things just rot asked Mr. Voelckers? This is a can of worms, said Mr. Miller. Many people just don't know about rot until it is discovered, said Mr. Hickok. I think the phrase "exclusive of the foundation" has to go, said Mr. Miller.

Discussion of Nonconforming Structures (Lines 115-141)

It says here that nonconforming structures can continue and I've added the concept discussed in the July meeting about additions to buildings not encroaching into setbacks, said Ms. McKibben. This is about it being okay to fill in a little cut, as discussed previously, said Mr. Hickok. Yes, when infill doesn't aggravate the nonconformance, is not further into setback, etc. said Mr. Voelckers. Ms. McKibben said this language is trying to articulate this concept but would be improved with an explanatory drawing. I am advocating for more illustrations in our code book, she said. Line 123 is better than Line 121, said Mr. Voelckers. I can get Lisa to help me with a drawing, said Ms. McKibben.

Ms. McKibben pointed out Line 124 which allows for additional stories on a building, which is in code. An applicant would apply for an upfill CUP. We are not suggesting a change, but this should be referred to in the language, said Ms. McKibben. There should be language about this being permissible as long as it doesn't negatively impact the neighbors; also language for the footprint infill. Mr. Voelckers suggested that this could be a CUP process so that neighbors could have the opportunity to comment. But this would come up in a building permit review, said Mr. Miller. Maybe this should rise to the Planning Commission level, suggested Mr. Voelckers.

Ms. McKibben moved onto Line 127 which discusses structures damaged by any means. The language here says it is not to be reconstructed except for the provisions of this code. What does this talk about, asked Mr. Steedle? This breaks down into lots, structures and uses, and I think that is good, said Mr. Voelckers. Mr. Miller said he received a call from a woman who came to town to move her father into a home. The father had been living on 4th street for 40 years, there was lots of trash, and the woman needed help to move things. When Mr. Miller arrived, he pointed out things that had gone unnoticed; the house was basically falling down the hill. Now it is up for sale, and someone is going to buy it, said Mr. Miller. But to fix it right it will be considered more than a 75% rebuild. This is an example of someone who wants to live in a particular building and location and wants to put the money in to fix it up, but they might get shot down. Ms. McKibben said that the current policy is we would allow for a rebuild in the existing footprint except for encroachments into the right-of-way. Do you want to keep that, she asked? But the 75% thing is still there, said Mr. Miller.

Mr. Voelckers asked for a nonconforming structure example. Ms. McKibben said the variance requested recently on Twelfth Street is one where the setbacks did not conform for a complete rebuild on the property.

Mr. Voelckers asked Mr. Miller his thoughts. Mr. Miller said maybe it doesn't really matter and the structures in our town are important enough that if they are legally nonconforming then it is ok. The potential is that a legally nonconforming structure, damaged by any mean (not just catastrophic), any new building except one built on

encroachments is ok; this is what I am hearing, said Ms. McKibben. Mr. Voelckers said the thing he is concerned about is the neighbors. Maybe we are bending over backwards to accommodate a homeowner but the structure has been problematic for years for the neighbors, he said. Also there is a concern about health and well-being. Mr. Hickok said he doesn't like the idea of property owner losing out. Ms. McKibben said to get back to Mr. Voelckers' reminder, we have the ADOD process and active plans to work towards a new zoning district which will more accurately reflecting the historic nature of the neighborhoods. These are things to think about, she said, and a decision is not needed today. We will flag this topic to come back to later.

Ms. Boyce asked if height is a factor for a nonconforming structure. Mr. Miller said for a building that is already in place, neighbors can't be purchasing property with the intention that this tall building will someday come down.

Just have a situation with the recent fire on Sixth Street where the house will need to be totally rebuilt, said Mr. Steedle.

Line 134 – no disagreement here. Density or use is governed somewhere else in the code.

Discussion on Nonconforming Uses (Lines 143-215)

Nonconforming use is a big, tough area, said Ms. McKibben. Beginning with Line 150 is a whole new concept, the change of use in the same category, borrowed from Portland. Portland has code for off-site impacts while we do not, said Ms. McKibben. I like the language, she said, so staff has the ability to document in some way showing we have done an evaluation of this in our review.

For Line 147, I would suggest that they don't operate between 11 and 6, said Mr. Voelckers. What about the conex containers we just approved with noise happening beyond the operating hours, asked Mr. Hickok. Ms. McKibben said, if this was a nonconforming use, then it would go before the Planning Commission. And then it would no longer be nonconforming, with a CUP, said Mr. Miller.

Mr. Voelckers suggested matching the operating hours to the noise ordinance.

For changes of use (Line 165) the example is the conversion of a storefront in a D5 zone, and my suggestion here is that these are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, said Ms. McKibben. An example is AmeriGas which is situated in a residential district, said Ms. McKibben in response to a query from Mr. Hickok.

Ms. McKibben explained that at Line 172, expansions, there is current code here with Portland language in italics, below. This could be simplified, she said. I thought we already decided not to allow expansion for nonconforming uses, said Mr. Hickok. Mr. Voelckers said what if AmeriGas wants to add more tanks on their property? We would want to decide that on a case by case basis, he suggested. How does that compare to Rainbow Foods expanding their grocery to more parts of the building (interior)? Ms. McKibben postulated about a small, nonconforming grocery in a residential district. This fits with CBJ policies about walkability for the neighborhood. Maybe more eyeballs will be on it if it goes through the Planning Commission process, said Mr. Steedle. I think Juneau is lucky because other communities have things like a strip club that are more emotional and controversial, so this is a great time to get this language into place, said Mr. Voelckers.

The intent for language beginning with Line 195 is to reinstate use. Ms. McKibben said it is interesting because the language is used in other communities but the intention is not explained. What if AmeriGas closes for a time to repair the building? I don't know what would be permissible, said Ms. McKibben. It is tricky and worth thought, said Mr. Voelckers. Maybe pull the director into the question to determine if there is legitimate reason

versus gaming the system, said Mr. Voelckers. Maybe proof goes back to the owner, suggested Mr. Miller. There are other concepts in Lines 199 and 200), is the committee okay with them, said Ms. McKibben? Mr. Voelckers said in Line 196 it says used discontinued for 365 days, does this apply here as well? How many people in Juneau know about filing a change of use application, asked Mr. Steedle? I think idea is legitimate, said Mr. Miller, but the reality is what if owners have a little grocery store which is accepted by the neighborhood and no one has ever said it is nonconforming. But then another large, cheaper grocery store opens nearby and the small store owners replace groceries with bicycles. Should they lose their ability to make a living when competition opens nearby driving them to sell bicycles instead of groceries, asked Mr. Miller? It seems difficult to determine what "different" use is; we might need more definition of changed use, said Mr. Voelckers.

Less than 365 days is considered unfriendly to property owners, said Ms. McKibben. But changing to a different thing is instantaneous, said Mr. Voelckers. I like the part about asking permission to reestablish, said Mr. Voelckers. This might clarify the variety of things that cause a stoppage – selling, moving, whatever – he said.

In Line 206 it was suggested to add an example.

Discussion on Nonconforming Residential Densities (Beginning Line 217)

It was decided that the committee will pick up here next time they meet.

IV) Next Meeting

Wednesday, October 11, 3:15 pm

VI) Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:41 pm.