

Village of Iola Ordinance Committee Minutes

Thursday, October 5th, 2023

5:30 PM

Iola Village Hall, Community Room
180 South Main Street, Iola, WI 54945

Meeting was called to order by chair, Rick Meyers; opening meeting statement was made.

Present: R. Meyers, chair, M. Fenn, S. Dane, P. Parks, M. McCoy; Larry Flowers

General Ordinance Review

Re: Residential District

Parks addressed the Village's R-1/R-2 & R-4 classifications as they appear in the Village Code Book, but not all residential housing seems to be operating under the correct designation. This problem became more apparent by our building inspector and when the Village was trying to assign waste containers to residential customers. The question: Does the Village have R-1 operating as R-2's, and R-2's possibly operating as R-4's and how to find out which properties are the rentals and landlords involved?

S. Dane asked how many rentals the Village has. McCoy mentioned it might be less than a dozen and Flowers agreed, but the exact number amount not exactly known. Parks will check on the amount.

Meyers suggested that the Village require all landlords to have a rental license. This could be added to our ordinance. Flowers stated that having a rental license requirement would help protect the renter and improve rental property conditions for tenants, such as safety and health requirements.

Dane asked if all rentals/landlords are required to have an annual inspection of property. Flowers stated that at least one annual inspection is required. This can be done by the fire department or even the building inspector.

Flowers suggested that the Village have a rental fee requirement listed on the rental part of the Village Ordinance and that the water bill be listed in the landlord's name to make it easier for the Village to make contact with the owner of the premise.

Dane asked who should have to pay a rental fee. Flowers suggested that all landlords who rent out their property, whether permanent or on a temporary basis pay a fee. Flowers stated that this would alert the fire department for example as to who is occupying the premise in an emergency situation.

Re: Central Business District

Meyers read what the current Village Ordinance states for who businesses can rent to as long as the business is actively operational:

"Residential quarters for the owner, proprietor, commercial tenant, employee or caretaker located in the same building as the business." [Village of Iola Code Book, 262-23, Section D (1)]

McCoy stated that it is obvious from this ordinance that some businesses are renting out and not complying with this, such as those above the Post Office.

Meyers indicated that they or anyone can request a variance. Flowers stated that a variance can be requested and would cost the landlord. Some have been renting to tenants for a while. McCoy suggested to the committee that the ordinance be changed to allow businesses to rent to any qualified tenant. McCoy further shared that having tenants above the business in the past meant instant business shoppers.

Dane asked who currently has rentals downtown. McCoy mentioned Corner Bar is owner occupied upstairs, Post Office has renters above, Little Wolf Gallery is owner occupied behind store; The Motel is operating to provide quarters for those working at the Foundry.

Flowers supports allowing businesses to rent to anyone, but these rentals should be fully converted living quarters, have full access to electrical boxes, water, heat, etc.; be fully brought up to standard safety code compliances, with all needed permits.

Re: Accessory Buildings-Residential and Central Business District

Flowers stressed that all should be compliant with Village Ordinance and all necessary permits taken care of with the Village Building Inspector before work is started.

Parks mentioned that in the Central Business District where there are rental tenants, those business needs to provide appropriate parking for tenants to be off the streets during restricted times.

Fenn addressed the issue of lawns. The Village Ordinance does not address the issues that exist in the rear of properties that are not compliant. Parks made a comment that the ordinance can address issues considered a public nuisance that are noticeable as a public concern or that are brought up as a concern by other residents.

Re: Fencing

Flowers commented that our ordinance does not allow for a fence to be placed within 3 feet of the property line. Some towns do, like Amherst; and others do not, like Iola. Flowers suggested the ordinance be changed to allow adjoining properties to place a fence on the lot line.

Dane asked if our 3 feet distance for a fence between properties is done for a reason. Fenn suggested that perhaps it was a question of safety to make it easier for property access by the fire department. Larry responded by saying that this has never been a problem in other towns that allow fences on lot lines. Fenn would check with our Village Fire Chief.

McCoy suggested that perhaps the property owners wanting a fence on the lot line could request a variance. But Larry responded that it would be certainly less expensive for the property owner if the ordinance would permit it because they would also need to file with the County about the fence on the lot line.

Re: Central Business District- Rentals and Business Signs

McCoy stated that he is fine with the Village requesting a rental fee change of \$50.00 but he would also like the Village to consider charging this same amount for businesses wanting to put up a sign. He does not believe that a permit fee for putting up a business sign should cost \$400, especially since 90% of the cost goes directly to the building inspector and not for any engineering fee requirement. Also, McCoy mentioned that he paid \$70 for the face of his sign; not \$140 like Corner Bar paid. They should get a refund of \$70 because the ordinance does not mention having to pay \$70 for each side of the sign. And McCoy suggested that the Village

Board or someone approved by the Board approve the design on the signs to avoid any inappropriate pictures or “off-color” language that would be offensive.

Meyers stated that the sign permit fee could be looked at during a Village Board meeting. Also need to look at considering a flat annual fee for Bob Viste rather than a commission-type.

Also Flowers requested that the Board consider permit fees for new home construction based on square footage rather than something else.

Since no other concerns or comments were presented to the Ordinance Committee,
Motion made by M. Fenn to adjourn meeting; second by P. Parks at 6:38 pm.

Submitted by Pamela Parks