DIRECTORS’ ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING
Monday, July 22, 2019
555 S. 10TH STREET
BILL LUXFORD STUDIO

I. MINUTES
   1. Approval of Directors’ minutes from July 15, 2019

II. ADJUSTMENTS TO AGENDA

III. CITY CLERK

IV. MAYOR’S OFFICE

V. DIRECTORS CORRESPONDENCE

VI. BOARDS/COMMITTEES/COMMISSION REPORTS
   None

VII. CONSTITUENT CORRESPONDENCE
   2. 3 unrelated person zoning rule - Pat Anderson-Sifuentes

VIII. MEETINGS/INVITATIONS
   See invitation list.

IX. ADJOURNMENT
Dear Councilmen and Councilwomen:

Greetings and thank you for your service. The recent 17 page report by a voluntary committee of Nebraskans was recently delivered.

The primary item out of that report in the media and public comment from elected officials is that it did not recommend a safe storage ordinance. And that is is technical true, it also did not oppose a safe storage ordinance. The task force did not reach a conclusion on that matter. The task force did reach consensus on other matters of public safety and I look forward to council instructing the government to enact those recommendations.

To facilitate a deeper understanding of the report, I have printed 4 color copies and dropped them off at the council office. I look forward to your continued efforts in this area. Because regardless of party, I am certain we all agree that one act of gun violence is too much. And child access to firearms is subject of general concerns.

Sincerely,
Robert Way
801 El Avado Ave
Lincoln, NE 68504
Preserve zoning rules that protect Lincoln neighborhoods

The “three unrelated person” rule has worked for decades to ensure safe living conditions and help protect neighborhood quality of life. It continues to be a very important protection for all neighborhood residents – both renters and homeowners. Without this ordinance, Lincoln neighborhoods will see a significant increase in party houses, crammed unsafe living conditions, and higher housing costs for both renters and homeowners. Lincoln’s definition of family allows any number of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption to live together AND may also include two additional unrelated persons. So, it easily accommodates large families - including immigrant families - who may prefer to live in large households. It also accommodates rental households with any number of related persons and up to two additional unrelated persons. Families and unrelated roommates have a huge variety of living arrangements from which to choose.

Lincoln’s definition of family from Lincoln Municipal Code:
One or more persons immediately related by blood, marriage, or adoption and living as a single housekeeping unit in a dwelling shall constitute a family. A family may include, in addition, not more than two persons who are unrelated for the purpose of this title. The following persons shall be considered related for the purpose of this title:
  a. A person residing with a family for the purpose of adoption;
  b. Not more than six persons under nineteen years of age, residing in a foster home licensed or approved by the State of Nebraska;
  c. Not more than four persons nineteen years of age or older residing with a family for the purpose of receiving foster care licensed or approved by the state or its delegate;
  d. Any person who is living with a family at the direction of a court.

Why does the city need to have these rules? Good community zoning law must prescribe limits in order to reduce the potential for conflict. For example, experience shows wild party houses are quite often single family rentals with a number of unrelated renters in excess of what is allowed by law. Wild party houses create severe disruption in the quality of life for everyone living near them. Over-parking, noise, trash, and
criminal activity like assaults, minor in possession, and vandalism are just some of the impacts that neighborhoods have to bear when these party houses are present. Ultimately, these problems lead to community divestment as both homeowners and renters choose to live elsewhere. Some may argue that those crimes can be dealt with regardless of the three person rule. However, community zoning law exists to prescribe rules that will minimize conflict and support a positive quality of life. It is far better to plan for a positive outcome than force neighbors to call the police and deal with a bad situation after the fact.

This same zoning law also protects against crammed and unsafe living conditions. Eliminating them simply allows Landlords to maximize profit by turning every room into sleeping quarters or cutting larger spaces into smaller ones to increase sleeping rooms. That’s bad for both buildings and the people who live in them. Zoning protections exist to create minimum standards that protect safety and health for everyone in the community. Those advocating to eliminate the rules falsely claim they adversely impact immigrant families, but the current rules specifically allow any number of related family members. What they do not allow are cramped and unsafe living conditions – which is the point of good zoning.

The current rules should also be preserved because eliminating the “no more than three-unrelated” zoning restrictions will lead to higher housing costs for both renters and home buyers. Investment properties, like apartments, are valued based on their total rent. Putting more tenants in a single unit to share costs can backfire when an investor-owner simply raises the rent because there are more tenants available to pay rent. So tenants would be paying more rent for less apartment. Higher rents equals higher values for all buildings in the neighborhood. So higher rents for tenants also begins to price out homeowners because investors compete for those same houses and are willing to pay more. Affordable housing is hard to find in Lincoln neighborhoods and eliminating the “no more than three-unrelated” will make it even harder.

Finally, historic preservation would be severely harmed if this provision were eliminated. The writer claims that changing the rule would remove an incentive to convert single family homes into duplex or triplex. However, the market trend with the rule in place is actually just the opposite over the last two decades: historic homes are being de-converted from apartments back into single family homes. These homes provide both neighborhood character and an option for “move-up” homes that let families stay in the neighborhood as they grow. Chopping them into apartments or converting them to group living homes has proven to be a very bad idea if you want the houses to be restored or well-maintained. The current zoning rules help preserve and protect those historic homes for future residents and families.

In summary, the “three unrelated person” rule is ensures safe living conditions, preserves historic homes, supports housing affordability, and protects neighborhood quality of life. It continues to be a very important protection for all neighborhood residents – both renters and homeowners. The current ordinances continue to serve Lincoln neighborhoods well and should not be eliminated.

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Pat Anderson-Sifuentez
Community Engagement
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NeighborWorks Lincoln’s mission is to keep Lincoln a safe and prosperous community by revitalizing neighborhoods and promoting homeownership
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