

January 16, 2014

The Honorable Harold Perrin
Mayor of Jonesboro
300 South Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Mayor Perrin,

On August 6, 2013, you appointed and it was confirmed by the City Council a committee for the purpose of studying multi-family housing issues for the City of Jonesboro over a six-month period, culminating on January 16, 2014.

The specific charge of that committee was to “study Multi-family housing issues...for the purpose of reviewing the multi-family housing inventory status and what recommendations may or may not need to be made moving forward in regards to multi-family zoning and development in the City of Jonesboro.”

The members of the committee were as follows:

Gary Harpole – Chairman
Gene Vance
Chris Moore
Dr. Charles Coleman
Lonnie Roberts
Ron Kelton
Dan Pasmore
James Shelton
Don Parker
Todd Burton
Doug Ward

In December of 2013, Mr. Parker was removed by a vote of the Council and he was subsequently replaced by Carroll Caldwell after a nomination from your office and confirmation by the Council.

Over a period of six months, the committee held a series of meetings becoming educated in several facets of multi-family housing, including but not limited to: Urban Housing and Renewal, Planning, Zoning, functions of the MAPC, Police issues, Fire Department concerns, building codes, impact on school districts, and Fair Housing laws and concerns.

We commissioned, with approval of the Council, a multi-family housing study by JQUAD to perform an on-site inventory and analysis of property conditions, as well as compile a study based on census data, previous housing studies, and consultation/interviews/surveys of existing multi-family properties.

The results of the studies, along with collateral from several of the presentations from various organizations, groups, and professionals are available through Legistar, or can be obtained by contacting the City Clerk's office.

As a result of extensive review, meetings and discussions, the committee is recommending multiple actions be considered by the administration for study, adoption and implementation. Those recommendations are as follows:

1 – Any multi-family development with 4 or more units in a single development or location be considered as a commercial business by the City of Jonesboro. As a commercial business, they would be required to annually obtain a privilege license; with categorization, fee schedules, and other decisions to be determined by the appropriate department and/or city council committee. They would be required with the privilege license application to identify an in-market contact, complete with address and telephone number.

As a commercial business, they would no longer be eligible for residential sanitation services provided by the City of Jonesboro.

2 – In regards to property management, once an owner or entity has an inventory of 36 multi-family units in Jonesboro, they would be required to identify on file with the City of Jonesboro a designated in-market property manager (this could be the owner if they so choose). This property manager would be able to act with certain authority on behalf of the owner, and to accept service on the owner's behalf.

Additionally, any single complex with 100 units or more would be required to have an on-site manager living on the property. This person would also be designated as the property manager, and would be able to act with certain authority on behalf of the owner, and to accept service on the owner's behalf.

3 – We recommend that the administration consider adopting a property maintenance code. While the specific would be identified by the appropriate department/council committee, we do recommend that those regulations be extracted from the ICC International Property Maintenance Code.

4 – We recommend that the administration form a separate committee to begin the study of impact fees for future development. We feel the issue of impact fees is not limited to multi-family development only, but the study should be comprehensive across all categories of development.

5 – We recommend that greater interactivity and communication be developed with the city's school systems to aid them in their ability to plan, understand, prepare for and contribute commentary regarding multi-family development within their districts.

Specifically, we recommend that Superintendents of the Districts inside the city limits be given representation for themselves or their designee on the Comprehensive Land Use and Master Street Plan Committees.

We further recommend that a policy be adopted where developers are mandated to notify affected districts by Certified or Registered Mail to the Superintendent of any multi-family rezoning application and to show proof of that notification as part of their application process. We also

recommend this certified notification extend to developers of currently zoned multi-family property upon submittal of a site plan for approval that will add multi-family units to their existing development.

We also recommend that upon the adoption of a property maintenance code, that training be made available to any interested SRO's or other designees of the school district in learning how to look for code violations when doing on-site visits to multi-family developments; and to clearly demonstrate a communication channel to report any noted violations to the proper department.

6 – In regards to land use planning, we feel that a properly maintained land use plan can be the single greatest tool for Planning Commissioners, School Districts, Board of Zoning & Adjustment and City Council members. We recommend that you consider reviewing the current guidelines and charges to the existing Land Use and Master Street Plan committees; and work to shorten the life expectancy of those documents to no longer than 2 years, with adequate review meetings and processes to keep both documents as "living" documents reflective of a changing market.

One of the specific charges given to the committee was consideration of existing inventory. Through our research, we identified some 82 parcels of property already zoned to accommodate multi-family development, representing a potential for 2,018 individual units.

After receiving research conducted by the city planning department, it was determined that 886.27 of those units (representing approximately 47% of the entire projected inventory) were associated within the flood plain either partially or fully.

It was also learned that 76 of the 82 parcels (93%) were rezoned over 15 years ago; with 67 of those (82%) having been rezoned 28 years ago as a result of the mass annexation.

We feel that these issues lower expectations that the bulk of these zoned properties will actually be developed; and given the previous recommendations for addressing what most felt were the most pressing issues regarding improving the impact that multi-family housing has on our community; that no action to universally limit future rezoning is necessary.

We thank you for the confidence that you have placed in the members of our committee, and we look forward to presenting these recommendations to the full council at your pleasure.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Harpole
Chairman