

City of Hays
City Commission
Work Session Notes

Thursday, August 1, 2019 – 6:30 p.m.

Present: Shaun Musil, Sandy Jacobs, Ron Mellick, Eber Phelps, John T. Bird, Toby Dougherty, and Kim Rupp
Henry Schwaller, IV joined by phone.

July 18, 2019 Work Session Notes

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the work session held on July 18, 2019; the minutes stand approved as presented.

Residential and Electrical Code Amendments

Jesse Rohr, Public Works Director, reported that effective July 1, 2017, the City of Hays updated electrical, building, and fire codes. Some recent concerns regarding the 2014 National Electric Code (NEC) and 2015 International Residential Code (IRC) were brought forward by contractors. A meeting was held on June 4, 2019 between electrical contractors and City Inspection staff to discuss certain sections of the adopted codes and their implications. Staff agrees with the concerns and is suggesting changes to the codes.

There are two code related changes being recommended at this time. Arc Fault Circuit Interrupter (AFCI) Circuits/Receptacles in existing dwellings, and placement of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in remodel/addition situations. The changes being suggested remove many AFCI and smoke alarm requirements for remodel projects in existing dwellings.

Mr. Rohr stated almost all rooms except bathrooms and garages now require AFCIs. He explained an AFCI protects against electrical related arcs from an electrical circuit or a device, which commonly lead to fires. If an arc is detected, the AFCI is tripped and kills the power to the individual circuit. AFCIs

and the wiring are easy to install in new homes; however, in existing homes, that can be an issue. Some existing electric panels are not configured to work with AFCI breakers. Older circuits and wiring methods may not be conducive to new devices and codes. AFCI receptacles are much more expensive costing \$22.00 compared to \$1.20 for a regular non-AFCI receptacle. Labor cost to comply with existing codes can reach into the \$1,000's.

Mr. Rohr stated the proposed amendments will allow for less expensive installation that does not affect the areas of the house not in the scope of the permit. It also allows the electrician to do minor maintenance or repair with minimal costs to the property owner. This gives flexibility to staff in making determinations on existing systems as to whether an upgrade is needed.

Mr. Rohr stated the second issue is in regard to the connection of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms throughout the home during alterations, repairs, and additions. In remodel situations, this code has been problematic due to access for interconnection, often requiring extensive "fishing" of wiring through attics and in walls to access hard-to-reach areas. This significantly increases the cost of a project that may have nothing to do with the majority of the dwelling. Staff desires a change to the code that would not require placement of smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms unless a sleeping room is remodeled or created, and in that case, it would only require smoke alarms in that bedroom and space immediately outside of the bedroom. The rest of the dwelling would remain untouched, and in theory, is still compliant to the code under which it was constructed.

Commissioner Jacobs asked if the code changes would affect replacing the smoke alarms in her home. Mr. Rohr stated it would not, that smoke alarm replacement does not require a permit.

Mayor Schwaller asked, prior to the suggested change, approximately how many houses had to be rewired or reconfigured to comply with this and what was the average cost. Mr. Rohr stated fortunately there has not been a lot of remodels in the last two years since the codes were adopted, so the number is minimal. He stated the average cost to make these updates to an entire house

could range from \$4,000 to \$8,000 and the smoke detector change could be upwards of \$2,000 to install and connect them throughout a house.

Commissioner Phelps noted that it was expected when the codes were adopted that there may be some small changes necessary.

Ralph Augustine of Ralph's Electric, Inc. stated it has been difficult informing the homeowners about the additional costs due to those code requirements, so he welcomes these changes.

At the August 8, 2019 Commission meeting, Commissioners will be asked to amend the 2015 International Residential Code and the 2014 National Electric Code as noted in the adopting ordinances.

2020 Budget Discussion

Toby Dougherty, City Manager, stated that the 2020 budget had been presented and asked if the Commissioners had any questions, clarifications, or changes to the budget.

On July 25, 2019, the City Commission set the public hearing date for the 2020 Budget for August 8, 2019. Following the public hearing, the Commission will be asked to adopt the 2020 Budget.

Mayor Schwaller noted that the Ellis County Historical Society is shutting down their operation at their current location. He stated the City funding was originally intended to help them with building maintenance. He asked the other Commissioners if they want to continue that funding. He stated he was not proposing any changes at this time, but feels it should be discussed.

Commissioner Jacobs agreed and stated if the funding was dedicated for that purpose, the Commission should re-consider that funding. Mayor Schwaller stated the current board may not know that is what the funding was intended for. He added, why would the Commission fund an outside agency that is not open to the public, and if they are considering tearing down that building the Commission may need to take action on that.

Commissioner Jacobs stated that she read they may not be open to the public, but will still be available to produce any information or documentation the public may want.

City Manager, Toby Dougherty, stated he read an article that the Ellis County Historical Society has temporarily moved out of the building with a long term goal of trying to raise money for a new facility. He added that if the Ellis County Historical Society would want to demolish the building, they must apply to the state and the City Commission would be asked if any other feasible alternative exists.

Commissioner Mellick asked that City staff research what the City funding to the Ellis County Historical Society was initially intended for.

Add on Item

Mayor Schwaller stated that because of a massive water leak, the City of Ellis had to quickly and unexpectedly close their municipal pool. He added that Ellis is a good neighbor and they have been very supportive of the City of Hays in our pursuit of water in Edwards County. We share the same aquifer and their decision to shut the pool and not waste water not only benefits them, but also benefits the City of Hays. Given this extraordinary situation he requested a discussion about providing Ellis residents with a discount to attend the Hays Aquatic Park. He suggested that take place immediately and be funded out of the City Commission Contingency Fund. The Commissioners agreed that was a good idea.

City Manager, Toby Dougherty, noted this could be funded under his spending authority. He stated he would ask Jeff Boyle, Parks Director, and Roger Bixenman, Hays Recreation Commission Director, to work together and offer half price admission to the Hays Aquatic Park to those that prove they are residents of the City of Ellis.

Other Items for Discussion

Commissioner Mellick commented that there was a good crowd for the Hays Police Department Community Night Out event at the Hays Aquatic Park and everyone had a great time.

The work session was adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Submitted by: _____

Brenda Kitchen – City Clerk