

The Bridge

Connecting with our residents

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City of Belle Plaine

July • 2019

Message ^{from the} Mayor: Citywide Development

Christopher G. Meyer – Mayor

Land use, zoning and development are all subjects that are constantly in motion at City Hall. Many of our residents are not aware of all of the rules, laws, and ordinances that come into play when developing a piece of property or make changes to your current property. There are several layers of rules and laws that are put into place to protect residents. The rules and laws come from many jurisdictions including Federal, State and Local government. Many regulations are put into place to protect the public's health, safety, and welfare and ensure that development is managed within the land use and zoning guidelines.

There are different guidelines depending on the type of project. For example, a commercial or industrial building would have much different regulations than that of a common residential structure. No matter what type of development, the City is bound by these laws, codes, policies, and rules to ensure safety as well as equal opportunity and treatment for all parties. One of the terms you will hear is "variance". This is when a developer asks to make a minor change to a property or project. These are all determined on a case-by-case basis. Many residents believe that the City has unlimited regulatory and decision-making power when dealing with development, but that is not true. As a project is brought forward, it is initially vetted by our building inspection and development staff, our City Engineer, and any outside professional assistance needed to guide the discussion. If the project meets the initial qualification, which would include consistency with the City's comprehensive plan, proper zoning and land use, proper building materials and site planning, proper utility, fire suppression, and Americans with Disability Act, to name a few, then the project moves towards the next stage of review.

*enjoy our
favorite
hometown...*

There is a specific time-line for the process, which is based on the complexity of the project with larger commercial projects take much more time. If the project meets the criteria, the City has very limited authority to deny or modify these projects. In the past, I have been asked why the City does not build a certain type of commercial project. The last example was a fast food restaurant coming into a neighboring town. I explained these are private investors who are developing these projects. The City's involvement is to manage, direct, and police the construction to ensure all of the codes are met. I was surprised that many people thought the City had an actual financial interest in these types of private projects. As I have discussed in previous newsletters, many local cities are trying to attract some of the same development and that is where incentives may be offered on certain projects. Many of these tools require significant investment from developers. In the past the City has successfully used tax increment financing, tax abatement and other types of grants and loans to facilitate development. Some of these successes include projects that involved a larger industrial facility, a larger grocery and retail development, public buildings, the post office, housing projects, and rehabilitation of commercial and residential projects. The use of these tools can be broad and if used and managed correctly, they can have a positive impact on generating additional tax revenue for the City. Many of these financial tools are very complex in nature and they can be hard to understand. So, I would encourage citizens to ask questions and become educated.

As we continue to have development, we always want to remember the qualities and great way of life that we all enjoy in our "favorite hometown"!

Spotlight on - Design Committee

The Design Committee is comprised of five members and a Council Liaison serving staggered four-year terms. The Community Development Department provides staff services. The Design Committee makes recommendations for design components of developments, comments on the design and architecture of commercial and industrial buildings, reviews signage in the Downtown, and provides advice on promoting 'sense of place' in Belle Plaine. The Committee reviews proposed changes to façades in the Downtown with a goal of promoting the historical look/feel of Main/Meridian. The Design Committee often makes recommendations to businesses pertaining to awnings, signage, and color choices. If you have questions about the Design Committee, please call the Community Development Department at 952-873-5553.



Left to right: Rick Krant, Benjamin Ogata, Kathy Joerg, Patricia Krings, Linda Lawler

Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign

The City regulates the size, number, type, and placement of signs to prevent visual clutter and promote public safety, health, and welfare. The City doesn't regulate the content of signs. Temporary and permanent signs require issuance of a permit available through the Community Development Department.

Permanent signs affixed to buildings or placed on the ground must be made of durable materials and placed in accordance with minimum construction and location standards. In the Downtown, the Design Committee reviews and approves signs meeting the area's design standards. Temporary signs such as vinyl banners, special event, pennants, streamers, and removable signs may be displayed for limited periods of time. Window signs are allowed without a permit provided more than 50 percent of the window remains free of signs.

Special conditions apply for dynamic (digital) signs and signs which are lit. Larger projects and multiple use sites may be eligible for a master sign plan or comprehensive sign plan review. Most residential dwelling signs are prohibited with

the exception of address signs. Home occupation signage is limited to one, unlit sign not to exceed four square feet in area.

Garage sale, campaign signs, real estate signs, and construction signs must be placed on private property and cannot be placed in public rights of way, at parks, or on public property including utility poles. Signs placed on public property or in public rights of way are subject to immediate removal. Off-premises signs, roof signs, signs which obstruct sight lines at intersections, and dangerous signs are prohibited.

Call the Community Development Department for more information or download a sign permit application from the City website.



What Is The Round-Up Program?

The **Round-Up Program** was adopted by the Belle Plaine Park Board and City Council in 2013. The purpose is to provide additional funding opportunities for recreational and community programming to benefit Belle Plaine youth. The Round-Up Program offers utility billing customers the option of "rounding up" their utility bill to the nearest \$1 increment, with the extra money going directly towards the Youth Activity Grant Program.



Some examples the funds will be used for:

- City Youth Activity Grants for families who meet specific income guidelines.
- Free and/or half-price swim lessons.
- Free and/or half-price city recreation sports programs.
- Purchase of bicycle helmets.

City Council Contacts:

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Register for Resident Discount

Residents can now register on-line for the resident discounted rate at the Belle Plaine Aquatic Center. (One registration per household.) <https://belleplainemn.net/rvtrak.net/rwresidentpooldiscount/>

Resident Discount

The Belle Plaine Aquatic Center is owned, operated and fully funded by the City of Belle Plaine. The City of Belle Plaine has defined a resident as an individual who lives within the city limits. Since residents pay City of Belle Plaine taxes to support the funding of the aquatic center, they are eligible for the discounted resident rate. City utility account number will be needed to register.

Join us for

Community Conversations

Tour of the Aquatic Center

5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

203 Prairie Street West

*There may be a quorum of the Belle Plaine City Council present.



July 2019 Government Calendar

1	Design Committee	5:15 p.m.
	City Council	Canceled
4	July 4th	Offices Closed
8	EDA	5:00 p.m.
	Planning Commission	6:30 p.m.
9	Public Safety	4:30 p.m.
10	Community Conversations	5:30 p.m.
11	Public Works	9:00 a.m.
115	Park Board	5:00 p.m.
	City Council	6:30 p.m.

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