

**MINUTES OF THE STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON AUGUST 3, 2023, 4:30 P.M.**

1. Call To Order / Roll Call

Mayor Thom Walker called the meeting to order. Council members present were, Victoria Hallin, Jack Edmonds, and Jenny Gerold. Absent was Jeff Reynolds. Staff present, Administrator Michele McPherson, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development – Planner Stacy Marquardt, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Fire Chief Ron Lawrence, Liquor Store Manager Dylan Donner, and PPU General Manager Keith Butcher. Absent was Attorney Damien Toven, and Wastewater Plant Manager Chris Klinghagen.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Discuss Rental Inspection Program

Lawrence advised that since he became the Fire Chief, the requests for inspections and complaints from the residents has increased each year. This year so far, he has been contacted by five different concerned citizens/residents about fire safety issues in rental buildings. These are complaint driven fire code violations and property maintenance violations.

The establishment of a rental licensing and inspection program would benefit the citizens, residents, landlords and business owners to help prevent serious injury or death. This ordinance would require annual licensing and regular inspections of all rental housing units in the City of Princeton.

He has researched several inspection programs with different cities and their level of inspections. They range from simple fire code inspections to a full-blown building and fire code inspection program along with city nuisance ordinance violations. For the majority of communities, the adoption and implementation of a rental licensing and inspection ordinance is a means of establishing a program of systematic rental housing inspection to promote and if necessary, compel proper maintenance of rental housing units to ensure they meet minimum safety standards all of which would constitute a danger to the public's health, safety and welfare if unaddressed.

Implementing standards or upkeep of rental properties is also undertaken by communities to ensure adequate reinvestment in the existing housing stock, which further preserves that community asset and improves the value of the properties in the neighborhoods of those communities.

Rental licensing and inspection ordinances that also address conduct on premises (disorderly uses) and include crime-free housing programs for owners and managers have been found to reduce criminal activity, which in turn lessens damage to the property, neighborhood fear and frustration with dangerous or threatening tenants, and declining property value caused when criminal activity affects the reputation of the neighborhood.

An annual rental licensing ordinance would also help keep accurate records of what rental housing exists in the city. It is common for the ordinance to exclude jails, hospitals, parish houses, rectories, dwelling units in cooperatives or condominium buildings, hotels, motels and state licensed facilities.

Rental inspection programs require all rental units to be inspected every 2 or 3 years. If violations are found, it is common to be inspected every year. This can be adjusted in the ordinance.

Maintenance standards and fire code standards can be referred to the International Property Maintenance Code book and Minnesota State Fire Code book. Most ordinances clearly establish enforcement steps when non-compliance is determined, beginning with written notification through revocation of registration and issuance of an administrative or a criminal citation.

It is common to have a "Right of Appeals" process established inside the ordinance for those who believe they are aggrieved by a decision of the code official through a compliance order or a decision to deny, suspend or revoke a registration.

Walker asked what would be inspected, entrances and exits? Egress windows?

Hallin asked who covers the costs of these inspections. Lawrence responded that the landlord pays for the inspections.

McPherson stated that there are various levels of inspections that could be done. From basic life safety to nuisances.

Walker said he feels it is important to clarify what will be inspected. Will inspections also look at basic building code, and air quality like mold and radon. J Gerold added that this is an area where radon is prevalent.

Walker questioned how much in staff time will this program cost to run. McPherson responded that staff just received a list of rentals that the county has recorded, so staff will put together some numbers.

Walker questioned if the city's building inspector will be doing inspections along with Chief Lawrence. A building inspector can look at code violations, but many times a home was built prior to code changes. He wondered how it would be handled if properties were found to be converted into a multi-family home without any permits pulled.

J Gerold stated a yearly license is probably a good idea, and basic safety items be inspected.

Staff will begin working on a draft ordinance and bring it back for review.

4. Discuss Technology Services Memorandum of Understanding with Princeton Public Utilities

McPherson advised that Princeton Public Utilities's IT person is going to be retiring soon. They do have a contract for IT services, but would like someone on hand to help for a few hours a month. Staff has determined that with council approval, the city and PPU may be able share IT Manager Ed Yost for a set number of hours per month, which shall be charged to the PPU on an hourly basis. Butcher added that they feel it would work well with the City and PPU using the same security and phone systems that Yost is already familiar with.

Staff will bring the MOU back to the Council for approval.

5. Discuss Adult Use Cannabis Moratorium

McPherson provided information from other jurisdictions, and the League of MN Cities regarding adult use cannabis, and the current ordinance 825 regarding cannabinoid products.

J Gerold stated does not want it to be allowed in public spaces, on sidewalks, in parks, etc. Walker agreed with no public use.

McPherson added that they will also need to look at zoning to determine where it could be grown. Staff is proposing a moratorium on sales, and to prohibit public use. Staff will continue to work on drafting an ordinance. At the next meeting, there will be a Resolution calling for a public hearing on the moratorium, which will be held at the August 24th meeting.

6. Adjournment

HALLIN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:52 PM. J GEROLD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully Submitted,

ATTEST:

Shawna Jenkins Tadych
City Clerk

Thom Walker,
Mayor