



By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

Liberal City Commissioner Ron Warren presented his idea for a Housing Advisory Board and a Building Trade Board at a city commission meeting in October of 2013.

No action was taken at the time, since staff agreed that there needed to be more direction in the make-up of the proposed boards.

Since then, Warren said that city manager Mark Hall has worked on the proposal and has presented something to city staff.

The proposed structure of the board will consist of a licensed electrician, a licensed plumber, a licensed mechanical engineer, a residential contractor, a commercial contractor and an architect.

Warren added that the board could possibly resemble the Garden City board, which consists of seven board members.

He also said that he feels there is support from the community, and he's hoping for the best in developing the boards.

"It will be a commission decision," he said. "I think I have rallied support finally. I think they are understanding what I want. I think they understand what it's for, so I think we will see something happening with that in the near future – hopefully."

Furthermore, Warren, who has been doing construction in Liberal for more than 30 years, said he believes the advantages of having these boards would be to have more input as far as different ideas on dealing with housing development, and having several points of view instead of just one.

"It's obvious, the advantage, but some people may not think so," Warren said and chuckled. "Some people, they believe, that this complicates the decision, but it doesn't have to."

There are local codes that deal with set backs and zoning of areas where it's residential, R1, R2, R3, or commercial land, and Warren said that the advantage of the code would be for it to not just all be on the city inspector if somebody wanted to change something.

It's easier to see the need because of being in construction, he said, and the board will have to look at what can be done with housing, because the economy dictates a lot of that.

Warren noted what his goal was by bringing this to the commission.

“My plan was for us to talk about it,” Warren said.

The specifics of the board will be up to the staff, he added.

“Hopefully, we will have a discussion about it at some point,” Warren said.

Warren said he “will try and work with building inspector Kory Krause on some of the details and then talk about that with the commission.”

He emphasized the value of public input.

“We are missing public input,” Warren said. “You don’t have to miss public input, like (Mayor) Dave (Harrison) said, if those people would come forth and present their ideas. It’s all good. But generally, the people that want to do that would be more likely to do it on the board than just come to the city commission meeting and just throw out an idea. With the board, we are asking people to come forward and give ideas. By not having either board, we are missing the extra input.”

He also noted that the Housing Advisory Board and a Building Trade Board would help with areas that the city commission isn’t necessarily experienced or knowledgeable with.

“That was my point at one of the meetings. Do we want people bringing problems to the city commission. Yeah, that’s great if everyone on the board is me when it comes to building and the same with housing,” he said. “I think we didn’t have a recognition of the problem until I was on the board. I think that’s what I was trying to get at. Those problems that need to be worked on aren’t best suited for the city commission.”

To change rules, it has to be OK’d by the city commission, Warren noted.

“The commission, when presented the right information, will make a good decision,” Warren said. “I have confidence in our commission to determine whether or not we need a board.”

Warren thinks a construction advisory board may have existed in Liberal about 50 years ago.

“I would have been in kindergarten at the time,” Warren said and laughed. “But I have heard that there used to be one at one time, a plumbing board. It used to have a similar function in place to help with safety issues.”