

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
June 27, 2016

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pomraning called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Jim Barrow, Barbara Clark, Jerry Cummins, Steve Moss, Tom Scribner, and Mayor Allen Pomraning.

Absent: Councilmember Dick Morgan.

City staff in attendance: Acting City Manager Jim Dumont, Development Services Director Elizabeth Chamberlain, Finance Director Jean Teasdale, Fire Chief Bob Yancey, Communications Manager David Brauhn, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

A. Vacation rental policy.

Mayor Pomraning reported the City has been discussing the issue of short term rentals since January 2016, and had asked staff to review and present a report to the City Council.

Development Services Director Chamberlain reviewed:

- First step has been gathering information on how other jurisdictions manage short-term rentals.
- Some jurisdictions prohibit short term rentals in residential zones, while others require licensing, sufficient off-street parking, a local contact, and a high infraction fee for violations.
- The City of Walla Walla has an estimated 107 to 133 short term rentals within the City limits.
- Staff recommendations include:
 - Do not ban short term rentals in residential districts but address the impacts.
 - Implement an annual business license program with required safety inspections.
 - Require a local contact be within a certain radius of the property.
 - Have a tiered system for owner-occupied short term rentals versus non-owner occupied.
 - Require adequate off-street parking.

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- Charge an application fee that covers the costs of the program with a lower annual renewal fee.
- Assess a high fine for infractions.
- Require verification that lodging and sales taxes are paid.

There was discussion on:

- Different short-term rental models, such as owner-occupied rentals versus absentee owners, and their differing impacts on neighborhoods and home affordability.
- A ban on short-term rentals would be detrimental to the tourism industry and difficult to enforce. Leavenworth is looking at revising their provisions to allow short-term rentals in residential neighborhoods.
- Implementation of a business license.
- Importance of ensuring the safety of guests and leveling the playing field for collection and remittance of taxes.
- Regulate only to a minimum so guests are not endangered and neighborhoods are not unfairly impacted.
- Investments in housing by corporations or individuals.

Mayor Pomraning invited public input.

The following offered comments, suggestions, concerns, or support for regulating short-term rentals:

- Norm Ostermann, 1032 Pomona, Walla Walla.
- Dan Leeper, General Manager of the Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center.
- Steve Shulman, 22 Red Hawk, Walla Walla.
- Kathryn Austin, 534 Catherine Street, Walla Walla.
- Chaundra Dominguez, 728 Woodbury Lane, Walla Walla.
- Chris Coates, 1089 Aubin Road, Walla Walla; Sales Director at the Marcus Whitman Hotel & Conference Center.
- Bruce Hollowell, 225 Sumach, Walla Walla.
- Allen Fielding, Cameo Heights Mansion.
- Karin Western, 1052 University, Walla Walla.
- Marcus Carney, Visit Walla Walla.
- Gail Bodorff, 144 Newell, Apartment 14, Walla Walla.
- Lori Fischer, 928 Ridge Crest Court, Walla Walla.
- Michelle Rennie, 257 Girasol Lane, Walla Walla.
- Alexa Palmer, Walla Walla Vacation Rentals.

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There was additional discussion on:

- Continuing to work on the issue and gather public input.
- Refine the issue and provide for review by the Planning Commission.
- Ensuring the playing field is level for short-term rentals and other lodging establishments.
- Impact of short-term rentals and investment housing on housing affordability.
- Effect of non-resident housing on neighborhoods.

Development Services Director Chamberlain asked that any interested citizens contact her to be placed on a notification list.

- B. Consideration of Blue Mountain Humane Society's request of fee waiver.

Staff reported the Blue Mountain Humane Society has submitted a request for a building permit fee waiver.

Sara Archer, Executive Director of the Blue Mountain Humane Society, asked for consideration of a contribution or building permit fee waiver as part of their capital campaign to remodel and add on to the main animal shelter facility. Total project cost is estimated at \$850,000. Total permit fees for the City are \$11,430.10. The Blue Mountain Humane Society has taken on many projects to assist both two and four-legged citizens.

Development Services Director Chamberlain reported the new building codes go into effect on July 1. Staff is accepting permit applications prior to this deadline if the project was designed based on the 2012 building codes. The application is not considered filed until the permit fees are paid.

There was discussion on fee waivers for non-profit organizations; implementation of the new building codes; and when the project will be constructed.

It was the consensus of a majority of Council to put this building permit fee waiver request on the June 29 Consent Agenda.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

There was discussion regarding homelessness and social issues in the downtown area. Staff was asked to provide Council with the report that

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was prepared last year on this topic. Mayor Pomraning appointed Councilmember Moss as chair of an ad hoc committee, selected by Councilmember Moss, to review reports and research the social and homelessness impacts on the downtown area with a report back to the City Council.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:09 p.m.