

Planning Commission

Work Session Minutes **Wednesday, November 18, 2015** **11:00 a.m., Council Chambers**



City of South Haven

The meeting was called to order 11:00 a.m. by Chair Paull. Present were planning commission members Peterson, Gruber, Webb, Frost and Heinig. Zoning administrator Anderson and some members of the public were also in attendance.

Public comments were received.

Paull opened the meeting with comments directed at the audience regarding civility and asked for a stop to the bullying whether online or at meetings.

Anderson explained that she would like the members to discuss the specifics they would like to see in drafting the ordinance. She asked specifically about options already discussed such as registration, regulating rental properties by area, overlay zones where rentals would require special use permits or site plan approval by the planning commission. She asked what the key points of the ordinance are going to be.

Heinig stated that noise is really not a big issue according to the police chief and the special police officer to be hired for the summer will address that and illegal parking. He also said that extra parking will be available through a pending zoning ordinance amendment as will excessive height. The biggest concern he sees remaining is the density of occupants caused by very large rentals in the neighborhoods. A brief discussion of ways to limit occupancy was discussed with some agreement that limiting the number of adults allowed to a bedroom is a fair idea. Anderson stated that conversations with the fire marshal found that he does not set occupancy limits on residential uses, only commercial and industrial uses.

Webb stated that occupancy limits are okay but why are they considering that if it doesn't appear to really be an issue? Heinig responded that it should be done to control parking and avoid overtaxing the utility systems.

Gruber stated that he feels any ordinance should be kept simple. The city should have all regulations for rentals on the website. He also stated that he supports a registration program as do the other members. There was general discussion and agreement that the commercial zones are not a good location for the very large rentals but the RM-1 zone would be very acceptable with site plan approval by the planning commission.

Frost questioned how to handle the R-1 zones. Should there be a limit on all rentals in the residential zones or does it matter? Peterson asked why we should care about how many rentals are in a zone if most rentals are, as it appears, not disruptive.

Gruber said that part of the registration process should be that we need a local contact available 24/7. Rental houses need to post escape routes from the house as well as emergency phone numbers for police, fire, etc.

Anderson asked when the members would consider a rental to be too large for a neighborhood. When is it to be considered not for personal use? Would it be by square feet? Number of bedrooms or toilets? A lot of "large" houses are built here intended for the personal use of the family. Anderson stated that of the 24 new residential building permits issued over the last 24 months, only 5 of those were under 3500 square feet and not all of the larger homes were intended as rentals.

Webb stated that she agreed with having guidelines on the city website and added that any rental rules should also include the requirement that refuse containers be screened and that trash needs to be picked up as needed, not just once a week.

Frost added that permits for rentals should be laminated and placed in windows. The permits should include the registration number, rules for rentals, relevant ordinance sections and emergency contact numbers. Gruber added that the registration number should be included on all advertising.

There was lengthy discussion regarding the process for registration. The process would begin with open enrollment when the ordinance is adopted. There will be no need to demonstrate that the house has been rented in the past. There was also discussion regarding what would happen if an existing house, without the extra parking and over the determined size limit (assuming there is one), was requested by the owner to be a rental. It may be because of a transfer or any other legitimate reason. Would we deny them that?

Next meeting on Wednesday, December 2, 2015. Time and location to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
Linda Anderson, Zoning Administrator