

DeFuniak Springs City Council
Special Workshop Minutes
February 11, 2020

The following members were present: Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight, Councilmember Todd Bierbaum, Councilmember Kevin Crystal, Councilmember Henry Ennis, and Councilmember Wayne Graham. Also present were Mell Smigielski, City Manager; Kelly Schultz, Planning Director, Code Enforcement Officer Chris Strawn; City Attorney Clay Adkinson, Secretary to the Mayor and Deputy City Clerk Cynthia Permenter and City Clerk Maryanne Schrader. Mayor Bob Campbell was excused.

Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. **Roll Call** - City Clerk Maryanne Schrader called the roll: Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight: present; Councilmember Todd Bierbaum: present; Councilmember Kevin Crystal: present; Councilmember Henry Ennis: present; and Councilmember Wayne Graham: present. The City Clerk declared a quorum was present.

Planning Director K. Schultz introduced the Code Enforcement Officer, Chris Strawn. Ms. Shultz mentioned some of the old cases C. Strawn is working on involved recreational vehicles.

3. **Purpose** – Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight stated the workshop is for the purpose of discussing recreational vehicles. He mentioned the Land Development Code shows that there are restrictions to parking and suggested it may be overbearing on property rights. He has noticed over twenty violations near his home. To summarize the purpose, he read section 18-53 of the Ordinance regarding RVs, campers private motor coaches, and travel trailers. He mentioned the requirement for the RV to be parked in an enclosed space is current law.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson mentioned the Council has passed a moratorium against the enforcement, as it relates to section 18-53. He added he will guide the Council regarding State Law and will give direction to the staff on enforcement.

4. **Current regulations** - Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight mentioned 18-53 is from the current ordinance passed in 2017. Councilmember H. Ennis added the past Council was concerned that mobile homes may bring the value of the surrounding homes down.

5. **Issues regarding relaxing current regulations** – Mayor Pro-Tem Robert McKnight presented questions that may help spur discussion.

Councilmember T. Bierbaum called for a Point of Order to utilize the clock for speakers and hold the remarks to three minutes on which was seconded by Councilmember K. Crystal.

6. **Citizen Comment** - Citizen Ed Butler addressed the Council voicing his concern the Ordinance was more like an HOA. He does not think it should be a complete prohibition. He likes his RV unit on his lot because it is easier for him to maintain it. He asked for a relaxation of the law.

Citizen Redgie White spoke as an RV owner. He drove within two miles of his house and saw instances of piled up debris and old, abandoned vehicles. He mentioned he does not have the property to place an enclosed structure and requested a relaxation of restriction.

Rudy Sangl brought up several of his concerns. He said people pay ad valorem taxes already. He mentioned the restrictions are too harsh as there are people living in a converted school bus in the city. He added people who have boats and RV's will not annex into the city. He wants the city to stay resident-friendly.

Robert Raymond spoke and said he has violations but would like to see improvements in the area. He does not think we should be overly restrictive, however.

Citizen Harley Henderson came forward to speak on the financial hardship of having to place an enclosure over an RV. He added modular homes are being excluded and suggested adding not allowing people to live in RVs. He believes that RV owners are being discriminated against, and stated RV's look better than junked cars and old bedsprings.

Citizen Anthony Valle also agreed that this Ordinance is like an HOA approach. He believes that the RV should be parked in the rear or side yard at least 20 feet from the front of the house, be in useable condition, be road worthy, and if doing home renovations, an owner should be allowed to live in it if it is part of the permit that includes electricity. He added that the Ordinance should include boats and all recreational vehicles. He said the owner should be able to use their property to store their recreational vehicles.

Dan Cosson came forward to speak on the enclosure issue, as he is not financially able to do it. He mentioned the crumbling infrastructure and sidewalks as more serious issues. He witnessed some that are connecting a hose from the RV to the sewer and are living in the structure.

Code Enforcement Officer C. Strawn said they had 90 open code enforcement cases. No one is driving the issue on the RV parking, but he has sent violations on the complaints that are open. He added, when there is an open building permit, the department does not send a violation on anyone living in an RV.

Mr. Cosson said it took him five years for construction and renovated as they could afford it. He remarked the restriction of 24 hours is too short.

Planning Director K. Schultz stated the driving issue is public complaints about violations, and her office must be responsive to the citizen complaints.

Mr. H. Henderson added enclosed storage is limited in this area and stated the best thing to do is to exclude RV enclosures.

Citizen Linda White mentioned the cities displayed in in the RV magazine that Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight presented were not like DeFuniak Springs. Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight mentioned the magazines were just used as an example.

In response to Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight, City Attorney Clay Addison said there was nothing in the prior ordinances that contained restrictions, as in the present Ordinance.

Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight asked if the citizens present had previously known that the city had the restrictions that were imposed, but no one spoke up.

Councilmember H. Ennis said not all sections of the city have many RVs. Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight asked about HOA in subdivisions, and Planning Director K. Schultz said there are some subdivisions with HOAs, but the city does not enforce them.

7. Council and citizen comment - Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight said more user-friendly restrictions could be found regarding parking from other cities.

Councilmember H. Ennis said the Ordinance is too restrictive. He added this has been a gradual problem over the years. Councilmember W. Graham agreed it was time to relax the restrictions. Councilmember T. Bierbaum suggested the restrictions were draconian.

Councilmember H. Ennis suggesting that temporary living quarters for guests should be allowed, as well as during construction. However, a restriction would be that the RV is in running order, they are paying fees for water, and adding an appropriate fee to a building permit.

Councilmember K. Crystal mentioned the cost of having an enclosure. He mentioned the burden on code enforcement when there are abandoned cars, blight, and too many people living in one dwelling. He added the history issue as we now have people recently moving here with an RV. He agreed with easing the restrictions.

Councilmember H. Ennis added the issues all started with the blight problem.

8. Next steps – Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight said the consensus from the Council is to ease the restrictions.

City Attorney Clay Adkinson said the next step would be for the staff to present something that encapsulates the Council intent. City Manager M. Smigielski said staff could come up with something for the citizens and Council to approve. Councilmember T. Bierbaum requested staff to return something for review within thirty days.

Planning Director K. Schultz agreed she will address a solution to the enclosure problem, will ensure the RV's are road worthy and ensure that the RV's are not be used for guests, such as an Air BNB.

Dan Cosson suggested the churches or volunteers could assist people with blight issues by helping them get the items out of their yards.

Planning Director K. Schultz stressed every code case open is a result of a complaint. She added 1254 properties have been identified that have some part of blight, so they are in the process of soliciting groups that will help clean up the properties. She added the effort takes time and


coordination. She mentioned the priority is to coordinate groups and present a plan to the CRA and address the blighted properties.

Mayor Pro-Tem R. McKnight agreed the RV issue is the least of the blight issues. The consensus was for staff to return a solution to the Council.


Mr. White stated he appreciates the Council having an open mind for a resolution.

9. **Adjournment** - Mayor Pro-Tem McKnight adjourned the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

APPROVED:


Robert McKnight, Mayor Pro-Tem

ATTEST:


Maryanne Schrader, City Clerk

