

Licenses Committee
October 5, 2020
5:30 p.m. - City Hall Council Chambers

Chairman Jim Bacidore called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Chairman Bacidore, Alderman Demes, Alderman Reynolds, Alderman Crane.

Absent: Alderman Herndon.

Others present: Building Inspector Andy Bacidore, Economic Development Director Leah Inman, City Attorney Jim McPhedran (Arrived at 5:42 p.m.), Mayor Jeff Grove (Arrived at 5:45 p.m.) City Clerk Carrie Brown, Deputy City Clerk Brent Bader.

A quorum was present.

Chairman Jim Bacidore opened the meeting by explaining he received a couple of calls from residents who are worried the proposed license fee increase for landlords who do not attend in-person or virtual training will simply be passed onto renters through increased rent. Building Inspector Andy Bacidore explained that we can move forward with that option or make the training a requirement to get a license. Building Inspector Bacidore said a lot of communities make attending the training a condition to get their license and if they don't, they can be found non-compliant and residents can be asked to leave within a certain amount of time.

Chairman Bacidore also discussed a vacant building on Fourth Street that's being turned into a rental but is currently vacant and falling apart. Building Inspector Bacidore explained that would actually fall under the city's vacant building ordinance which has a different process of ensuring the house is up to code.

Returning to rentals, Chairman Bacidore asked how they can avoid having landlords pass the increased fees onto renters. Building Inspector Bacidore said instead of raising fees they could just pull rental licenses if many ordinance violations begin to pile up. But if the landlord raises the rent due to the high number of ordinance violations and fees they are paying, it should be up to the renter to decide whether they want to continue living there and paying the increased rent.

Building Inspector Bacidore explained he was part of the discussion when the rental program was put into effect and the City had many rentals that weren't taken care of thus making the community look rough. Alderman Ptak added the City didn't know or have contact for any of the landlords at the time either. Chairman Bacidore said the City needs residents to purchase the homes but with most of the homes being owned by landlords and being in poor condition, no one wants to buy homes in those communities.

Building Inspector Bacidore asked for the Committee's thoughts and said his idea of enacting a training have having a penalty for missing it is to encourage responsible landlords. Alderman Crane liked the idea but said a \$60 increase per rental of landlords that miss training wasn't high enough as many would pay the fee to avoid a class. He asked about frequent ordinance violators and Building Inspector Bacidore said they could just revoke their license if ordinances begin to stack up.

Alderman Demes asked how the search for new software to track ordinance violations was going and Economic Development Director Leah Inman said the City has focused on three particular systems that would populate reports for Building Inspector Bacidore and allow access to alderman to view. They are now assessing pricing.

Building Inspector Bacidore re-explained his two options involving increased rental fees if they miss the training or making the training a requirement for a license. Alderman Demes added that if someone does pass a training, they don't need to take it every year unless they have violations again. Building Inspector Bacidore acknowledged the new software would make it easier to track violations, and specified when he mentions violations that he's speaking specifically of those that go to court and not ones that are solved after landlords are notified.

Mayor Jeff Grove asked whether Building Inspector Bacidore thinks landlords would attend classes, given that some don't show up for court. Alderman Crane agreed again stating the proposed rental fee increase for missing training was too small. Building Inspector Bacidore said, if the Committee wishes, the training could be required to get a license. Alderman Crane and Chairman Bacidore preferred that method. Mayor Grove said we could have applicants sign a waiver that they wish to skip the training but acknowledge in a document what is required of them before signing.

Alderman Reynolds said another issue is getting renters knowledge about City ordinances. He said landlords may know, but they may not pass that information on to the renters. Mayor Grove suggested that those that need to come to City Hall to set up water service could be given documentation about what's expected of them as well as information on other City services such as garbage pickup.

Building Inspector Bacidore also said some communities have a tiered-system denoting "gold," silver," and "bronze" properties based on their ability to meet the City's guidelines that is then posted online. Building Inspector Bacidore said the landlords he's spoken to would "love" that idea as it would improve the overall housing stock and thus improve their own business. But he noted that would take time to maintain and could be a project to assess later.

The minutes of the Licenses Committee held on October 5, 2020 were unanimously approved by the Committee after a motion from Alderman Reynolds and a second from Alderman Demes.

Chairman Bacidore set another meeting in two weeks for 5:30 p.m. October 19, 2020.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:07 p.m.



Carrie Brown, City Clerk by Deputy City Clerk Brent Bader