

SLT vacation rental ordinance to change Oct. 1

By Kathryn Reed

Those wanting a vacation home rental permit in South Lake Tahoe under the current rules have an extra month to get one.

The City Council today approved the controversial ordinance that will take effect Oct. 1. This ordinance only affects VHRs in residential neighborhoods, of which there are about 1,200 parcels.

Ten people spoke at the Aug. 4 meeting about the rentals. This was the second reading of the ordinance, which is usually a formality on the consent agenda without changes. It was pulled for discussion, which took more than 90 minutes.

“The City Council is making up this ordinance as they go. The council doesn’t understand the real estate industry and how escrow works,” Natalie Yanish, South Tahoe Association of Realtors board member, told *Lake Tahoe News*. “It’s unfortunate that they feel these bureaucratic processes and top down government tactics will work in the real world.”

Mayor Hal Cole said the purpose of the ordinance is to deal with the abuse of the industry, reel in houses being built purely as a vacation rental, and not to put anyone out of business.

The new ordinance requires notification within a 300-foot radius of a home seeking a vacation rental permit. Anyone, though, can voice an objection. However, the hearing administrator will have discretion as to whose comments carry more weight. Staff and electeds repeatedly said not liking a VHR is not a reason to have a permit denied.

If an issue is identified, it's possible an applicant could mitigate the problem and then the permit would be granted.

To deal with the mandated inspections – which are required for new permits starting Sept. 1 and existing ones' permit holders when their permit comes up for renewal – the city will be hiring staff. It's expected three to five inspections will be done a day. The city will have two inspectors dedicated to VHRs.

The fee schedule related to VHRs was also changed. The VHR inspection fee will be \$133. It was \$160.

Appealing a denied permit will cost \$1,500 for most people. Those living within 300 feet of the property will be charged \$250 to appeal. According to the staff report, that expense includes "15 hours of staff time including preparation of reports by zoning administrator for appeal to Planning Commission or City Council, compilation of facts regarding the decisions, review by mid-level and senior management official, public notification and public reporting requirements and conducting the public hearings."