

# EDC taking its time to revamp VHR ordinance



Supervisors Mike Ranalli and Sue Novasel, standing, talk VHRs on April 12. Photo/Kathryn Reed

## By Kathryn Reed

MEYERS – At the rate El Dorado County supervisors are dealing with vacation home rentals, it's possible some of them won't even be in office before a full ordinance comes up for a vote.

It was more of the same at the most recent meeting on April 12. Supervisors Sue Novasel and Mike Ranalli, who make up the VHR ad hoc committee, and county staff talked and talked; then there were sheets of white paper for the public comment; then those who were still left sitting in the magnet school's multipurpose room were able to ask questions and express the same concerns they voice every meeting.

Those who are subjected to unruly tourists are fed up and want action now. Those who advocate for these types of rentals worry about what some consider Draconian regulations.

The county has been gathering information about other jurisdictions. Issues being studied include whether events are allowed, quiet hours, limiting overnight guests, having a local contract, fines for owners and renters, and notifying neighbors about a VHR.

The county has an ordinance for short-term rentals for the unincorporated area of the Tahoe basin, but is looking to expand it to the West Slope. The Camino area, which is home to Apple Hill, is the main area with similar issues to Tahoe.

What was disclosed Thursday is the number of permits countywide:

- November 2017 – 727 active permits, 29 in the process
- March 2018 – 766 active, 46 in process
- April 12 – 822 active, 18 in process.

It was noted that whatever changes take place, like the potential of having inspections, this will pertain to future and existing rentals. Having everyone follow the same rules means there is no getting in now to avoid new regulations.

For now, the county is not talking about a moratorium, but it isn't completely off the table.

According to the presentation this week, the goal is to develop a “set of modernized policies and enforcement methods that retain the benefits of VHRs, prevents or mitigates the impact on neighborhoods, and minimizes their impact on public services.” The objectives are to “improve neighborhood compatibility and avoid overconcentration of VHRs and commercialization of neighborhoods.”

What was stressed by the electeds is that enforcement is the critical piece. They don't want to approve regulations that cannot be enforced.

From July 1, 2017, through March 5, 2018, the county assessed 154 penalties countywide for VHR and transient occupancy tax violations. The cash collected was approximately \$37,000, which includes interest.

Increased penalties and fees are something the county is considering. Today the application fee for a VHR permit is \$89. This compares to South Lake Tahoe where the fee is more than \$400, with an inspection fee close to \$150.

The county is looking to have fire districts do the inspections, not building inspectors.

"We have to talk about how we would pay for it," Lake Valley Fire Chief Tim Alameda told *Lake Tahoe News*. He attended the latter portion of Thursday's meeting. He added, "We did a dry run with a couple properties." His people were looking for "health and life safety types of things."

The county has had an online survey out for a while asking a variety of questions regarding vacation rentals.

Sue Hennike with the County Administrative Office went over some of the results. Noise was the biggest complaint, with the problem time from 10pm to 2am. However, 40 percent of respondents said noise is never an issue.

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#### Notes:

- This is the **existing ordinance** which only pertains to the unincorporated area of the Lake Tahoe Basin.
- Ad hoc committee meetings:

- o April 23 – meeting in Placerville from 5:30-7:30pm to discuss expanding rules to West Slope.
- o May 9 – meeting in Tahoe from 5:30-7:30pm to talk about parking, traffic and other issues.
- o June 11 – Placerville meeting from 5:30-7:30pm.
- o July 26 – Tahoe meeting from 5:30-7:30pm.
- Full board of supes to meet in Tahoe on May 2, 6pm at South Tahoe Middle School. VHRs will be the sole topic. Eight recommended changes to the VHR ordinance will be considered then.