

EDC takes slow, methodical approach to VHRs



El Dorado County supervisors and staff hear from Tahoe residents on May 2 about vacation rentals. Photo/LTN

By Kathryn Reed

When it comes to vacation home rentals, baby steps by El Dorado County officials are not enough for many who for years have been annoyed by visitors making a raucous in their neighborhoods. At the same time, several others don't want to follow in the steps of South Lake Tahoe where \$2,000 fines for parking and horrific national media attention have followed its latest ordinance.

The Board of Supervisors on the evening of May 2 spent a couple hours talking VHRs to a crowd at South Tahoe Middle School.

While the electeds had wanted people to talk specifically to the proposed ordinance changes, the 23 people who spoke were all over the board. It was much of the same that has been said

meeting after meeting.

CAO Don Ashton admitted the first step is to go after the “low hanging fruit,” with more substantive changes to take more time.

On Wednesday the board voted 4-0 for staff to make basic changes to the existing ordinance, with the expectation it will be ready for a first reading on May 22. (Supervisor John Hidahl was absent.) If everything goes forward, the changes could be in effect in July.

Proposed ordinance changes from the 2004 document include:

- Increasing penalties to \$500, \$1,000, and \$1,500 within an 18-month period.
- Revoking permits based on nuisance behavior.
- Clarifying language throughout the document, including reducing subjectivity by eliminating phrases like “best efforts.”
- Requiring exterior signage that includes local contact information.
- Capping the number of occupants between 10pm and 8am; in other words, only occupants of the dwelling may be there between those hours, no guests of the renters’.
- The ordinance would be for the entire county, not just the Tahoe basin.
- Inspections would be required before a permit is issued, with health and safety being the overriding concerns.
- Have code enforcement handle VHRs.
- Bear-proof trash receptacles will be required.

“We as the ad hoc committee will still be looking at

everything,” Supervisor Sue Novasel said. She and Supervisor Mike Ranalli are the duo on that committee. They will be at the magnet school in Meyers on May 9 starting at 5:30pm to hash out more VHR details.

Another change that was agreed to this week at the urging of Supervisor Brian Veerkamp was to make the response time to complaints be 30 minutes instead of an hour.

Exact fees, such as for inspections, have not been determined. The price will be whatever it costs Lake Valley Fire to do the job. No profit will be made.

Supervisor Shiva Frentzen wanted to know how the city’s VHR ordinance that took effect in late December has impacted the county. Novasel said it does not appear there has been a huge jump in permits being sought.

However, tax collector Cherie Raffety, whose department is responsible for VHRs, said as of mid-April there was a 13 percent increase in VHR permits compared to 2017.

There is no time line to implement further changes, or address the No. 1 issue of residents – noise.

More than once audience members brought up the desire for a VHR moratorium. On the flip side, VHR proponents said it’s critical to base decisions on facts, citing how during the winter only eight noise complaints were filed South Lake Tahoe. Plus, there is the economic component, with jobs being what was talked about the most at the meeting.

In the county’s proposed budget for 2018-19 is \$350,000 for code enforcement, an area El Dorado has skimped on in the past. Short-term rentals would get a chunk of that cash, as well as other county programs.