

WS enacts short-term rental moratorium

■ By Jacob Bertram
Columbia Gorge News

WHITE SALMON — New applications for short-term rental permitting, development, designation, construction, expansion, creating, locating, and siting within White Salmon city limits will not be considered in the near future, as the White Salmon City Council approved a six-month moratorium on such city business.

The moratorium, approved by council July 21, halts any city business on short-term rentals but gives consideration to owners of short-term rentals by allowing a 30-day window — from July 21 — for current owners with rental bookings finalized to comply with city requirements, including obtaining a business license and short-term rental permit. Such owners without permits “will need to document their bookings,

i.e. when they were made, etc. These property owners will then need to obtain a city business license and register their short-term rental with the city,” the city clarified in a website posting.

Any short-term rental currently permitted by the city is allowed to continue operating during the moratorium, the city clarified in the post.

City code defines a short-term rental as a “dwelling unit or lodging unit for which an owner receives or seeks remuneration for use or occupancy for a period of less than thirty consecutive days per rental period.”

A public hearing will be held Sept. 1 for city councilors to gather public feedback and to decide a plan of action to follow through the course of the moratorium. The councilors could decide to retract the moratorium at any time following the

state-mandated public hearing; they could also extend the moratorium past the six-month deadline “for good cause by resolution.”

White Salmon City Councilor Jim Ransier brought forth the moratorium for consideration by council last Wednesday, saying that after hearing public feedback and discussion about short-term rentals, “there’s a lot of worry about the impacts of short-term rentals on available housing and city infrastructure, as well as the small-town feel of our city. My belief is we need to push to have that discussion now so we can get focused, broad community feedback on what they want from short-term rentals. My hope is we can move quickly to address the public concerns.”

The passage of the moratorium marks the city’s most

significant action on the subject of short-term rentals since its 2019 adoption of an ordinance specifically addressing the type of housing, often referred to as vacation rentals. The 2019 ordinance instituted a requirement for a short-term rental permit for owners to acquire before listing the property.

With the adoption of city code on such rentals, “the city finds that the rental of dwelling units and lodging units for less than 30 days is an important contributor to the comprehensive plan’s tourism goal. The city also finds that these short-term rentals are part of an emerging market that has the potential to be incompatible with surrounding residential uses,” section 1 of the ordinance reads.

The ordinance also states a city desire to, among other intentions, determine the

short-term rental market impact on the local economy, reduce administrative burdens and barriers to entry, protect guests, and avoid unchecked neighborhood disturbances.

With the adoption of the original code in 2019, a system was implemented to gather data on the local short-term rental market and its impact on the housing stock through a registration system.

“We have that data now,” said Mayor Marla Keethler in a news release.

“I believe we can find a way forward that supports our local STR owners/operators while also addressing the other impacts of this increased use of housing stock in White Salmon,” Keethler said, confirming that the planning commission, city council and staff will begin to discuss further regulation on

the AirBnB-type of housing that caters to tourists and others who stay within the city for less than a month at a time

Short-term Registration Process

The City of White Salmon requires owners of short-term rentals to register with the City of White Salmon, and for owners to obtain a business license. The fee for each short-term rental registration is \$75. Also required is a letter that is required to be provided to neighbors within the vicinity of the short-term rental and Good Neighbor Guidelines which are required to be provided to your renters and kept in the short-term rental for references. The city website at white-salmon.net provides each document.

Bill to improve child support enforcement for Native American Tribes passes senate

Washington, D.C. — U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and John Thune applauded the Senate for passing their bill this week to improve child support enforcement for Native American tribes by allowing the 60 tribes that operate their own child support agencies to access the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program to collect past-due child support from non-custodial parents.

The bipartisan legislation would also create parity

between tribes and states by allowing tribal child support agencies to obtain other identifiable information of non-custodial parents that can be used to enforce child support. The bill now heads to the U.S. House of Representatives for consideration.

“It only makes sense that Tribes in Oregon and across the nation should have the same tools as state child support agencies, and with the passage of our Tribal

Child Support Enforcement Act they are one important step closer,” said Wyden (D-OR), chair of the Senate Finance Committee. “Once this bill passes the House and is signed into law, tribal child support agencies everywhere can ensure that kids get the support they deserve.”

“I’m grateful the Senate unanimously passed my bill to improve child support enforcement for Native American tribes,” said Thune (R-SD), ranking member

of the Senate Finance Committee’s Subcommittee on Taxation and IRS Oversight. “Tribes in South Dakota that operate their own child support agencies should have access to the same programs and resources that state child support agencies have. Our legislation would help ensure that families in Indian Country can collect child support payments that are past due and help put tribal and state child support enforcement

programs on equal footing.”

States have several enforcement methods at their disposal to enforce child support payments, including the Federal Tax Refund Offset Program. With this program, if a non-custodial parent is set to receive a tax refund and owes past-due child support, the U.S. Department of the Treasury can withhold the refund and send it to the state child support agency for disbursement to the family.

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