



Seaside has seen a growing number of vacation rentals.

Vacation rentals: Zoning ordinances would need to be updated to match plan revisions

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of that property because it is over the density requirement? That's the first question we get asked when someone calls when a property goes for sales. 'Can it be a vacation rental?'"

If the density is over 40%, property owners are discouraged from applying for the permit because the recommendation coming out of the planning department is going to be to deny it based on policies that are already set in place, Flory said. That density may be too high, planning commissioners and councilors said, leading to adverse impacts on housing affordability and demands on city infrastructure.

"My concern is that new vacation rentals are displacing long-term residents," Planning Commissioner Seth Morrisey said.

Vacation rental dwellings are turning into a business model, he said, and their numbers will accelerate.

City Councilor Randy Frank said competition for vacation rental dwellings could create a bidding war, artificially inflating the price of lodging. "That ultimately could harm our ability to stay competitive with other places on the coast," Frank said.

City Councilor Tita Montero said the density of vacation rentals in a neighborhood is a factor that should determine how many dwellings are allowed, but there are others as well, including how they affect the people who live here.

"We don't want an overpopulation of the VRDs in any segment of the city," Montero said. "What we need is a pause and moratorium, that we stop providing any more VRD licenses or permits over a period of time so that we can look at every one of these dif-

ferent options, see what we think is going to work and see what works for other places. We're not taking away something that somebody already has. What we're saying is, from this period of time, no new VRD licenses."

Density should not be the only way of measuring their needs, Planning Commissioner Kathy Kleczek said.

"Whether we're talking about sewage and water and electricity and broadband, emergency services and the rest of the community services are also impacted by all of these things," she said. "This is something that we need to look at and reduce so that we can be forward-looking instead of trying to catch up all the time with what's happening to us."

In future weeks, the city will need to "basically face-lift the entire comprehensive plan," Planning Director Kevin Cupples said.

Zoning ordinances would need to be updated to match plan revisions.

"And then from that, you'd know whether you want to move forward or not," City Manager Mark Winstanley said. "This would be a discussion that the council should be having at a council meeting as to whether they want to move forward with that kind of work."

As for a potential moratorium on vacation rental permits, Barber asked city staff and City Attorney Dan Van Thiel, in conjunction with the League of Oregon Cities, to provide the steps necessary if a moratorium is considered the right path.

The city may consider a part-time consultant to help with the research, Barber said.

"I'd like someone to tell us what we would need to undertake so we could have a moratorium, so we could make the decision on solid ground," he said.

'MY CONCERN IS THAT NEW VACATION RENTALS ARE DISPLACING LONG-TERM RESIDENTS.'

Seth Morrisey | planning commissioner

Fire chief: 'Volunteers are our most important asset. Volunteers choose to do this'

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"I always strive for professional goals, whether it is getting into another degree program, taking some more classes or becoming a better leader," Como said during an interview with the selection committee in November. "I feel that if you're not taking classes, if you're not learning, you're standing still. Not just for yourself — but for the volunteers who serve."

He has served on a volunteer recruiting committee, seeking ways to recruit and retain volunteers. "Volunteers are our most important asset," Como said. "Volunteers choose to do this."

He hopes to be able to motivate people and share the department's vision to serve the community.

Along with fulfilling the duties of the job, Como said he hopes to provide a vision to the

future and to make the fire station "the heart of the community."

"I know it may sound kind of cheesy," he said. "In old movies, the fire station may not be in the center of town, but it's the core of the community. It's what the community revolves around, and it's my hope to continue that effort."

City Councilor Brent Warren asked Como how he would deal with morale with firefighters if a bond for a new firehouse does not pass.

"Making sure I'm there for the firefighters is very important," Como said. "It's a family, the second part of a personal family. At the end of the day, we still have a job to do, and they're still here to do that."

"These volunteers aren't here because they're going to get a new station, they're here to serve the community as best they can. A new station would be great, but that's not what they're here for."

Homelessness: 'We're the lifeline in some cases'

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State data from previous school years shows the number of students designated as unsheltered usually sits around 2% to 3% of the total enrolled population. The number in emergency shelters is typically under five students, and is not recorded to protect confidentiality.

Rod Heyen, the principal of Warrenton High School, and Josh Jannusch, the principal of Warrenton Middle School, said many of the students who fit the homelessness designation live in mobile home parks and shared — often multigenerational — housing.

Warrenton is the fastest-growing city in the county and often the most attractive for younger families. But the county's lack of affordable housing has created competition, particularly for low- and medium-income households.

Viviana Matthews, the executive director of Clatsop Community Action, said she was not surprised by the percentage of students facing homelessness in Warrenton.

"One of the biggest barriers that we have is the lack of housing. The inventory, especially in Warrenton, is nonexistent, either for purchasing or renting," she said.

While the social services organization cannot work directly with students if they are minors, school districts often refer families to Clatsop Community Action if they need assistance with housing.

Another barrier for struggling families, Jannusch said, is that many social services are based in Astoria and Seaside.

Mary Suever, a middle school counselor, serves as the school district's liaison to identify and provide services to students experiencing homelessness to help ensure they have equal access to education.

"One of her biggest (responsibilities) is identification and that's not always as easy as one would think," Rogozinski said. "It doesn't always just show up on the registration form. There's conversation, and getting to know kids and families, and follow-ups."

"But I think a lot of it is the continuous and continuous communication to ensure that if families have any social service-type of needs, whether that's food, clothing, around the holidays — gifts and meals — Mary is the conduit to which that information gets to us."

Because students face so many different

situations, Rogozinski said, it is crucial for Suever to be assertive with outreach to families. Particularly with remote learning during the pandemic, he said, it was evident that many students relied on the resources that schools provide.

"We're the lifeline in some cases," he said.

Heyen and Jannusch emphasized that the community has stepped up to help temper the struggles many families face.

One of the largest contributors is the Assistance League of the Columbia Pacific, a nonprofit that seeks to strengthen communities through philanthropic programs. Each school in the county has a representative at the organization.

Kathleen Macdonald, who works with Warrenton High School through the Assistance League, said one of their main focuses is providing clothes for students, and in turn, helping reduce the social pressure that comes with having less wardrobe options.

Before the pandemic, they would take a busload of students to retail stores and supply a volunteer for each one to pick out essential clothing.

"We want to (provide) the one-on-one experience, which is about increasing their self-esteem," Macdonald said. "If I have holey shoes or I don't have clothes that fit or I don't have clothes at all, I may have some self-esteem issues that could be solved with some new clothes. It's a pretty amazing thing."

Rogozinski said Consejo Hispano, the Sunset Empire Transportation District and the local food

bank also support students.

"What I am constantly impressed by and amazed by is how there is no doubt it is an increased challenge for many students — it is absolutely impressive and amazing how well many of them learn and thrive, even in those environments that make it difficult to do so," he said.

While homelessness casts a shadow on the school district, educators know that solutions will likely require a greater state and federal focus.

"I don't think any of us in the public sector — service sector — is feeling like we got it figured out, or we wouldn't have 15.8% of our kids designated as homeless," Rogozinski said. "I think we are doing a good job of not letting it be defining for the kids, but I think we can't take our eye off that."

"The intentionality around that is huge and it's clear from the numbers ... it's a true challenge for us."

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Tom Rogozinski | Warrenton superintendent



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