

RENTAL from page 1A

has been damaged due to vehicles from the house driving on their property. "We've had these transient renters park their big vehicles on our property. Trespassing over our yard," they said.

Even the Cloud Nine street sign has been stolen, though there is no direct evidence it was taken by the renters.

"It's hard for me to give directions with no street signs," said Councilor Tom Mallen, who also lives next to Cloud Nine Road.

"If I call the police, they're not going to come," Johnson said. "If I told the sheriff, they're not going to come."

Dunes City has no police force, instead relying on the Lane County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) to keep the peace. However, LCSO is understaffed and overstretched. As a result, noise nuisance calls can take hours to respond to — if at all.

"I feel like I have no protection and I'm concerned," Johnson said. "It's not just the number of people, and the noise and the trash. ... All of the partying going on, I'm concerned about my safety. You can't call anyone because the owners live in Washington, and management doesn't live in Florence or Dunes City. Calling them has not been helpful at all."

Another neighbor echoed Johnson's concerns. "We don't know the nature of any of these folks that may be coming and going," they said. "If it was a long-term rental, they would be a neighbor. But as it stands, they are not a

neighbor. They are transient people coming and going who nobody knows." Del Riesenhuber, president of the Woahink Lake Association, expressed concerns about the environmental impact of the property.

"My concern is that it appears this piece of property has been converted from residential property to commercial property," he said. "My concern from Woahink Lake Association's point of view is: Is this property up to standards for its sewage system? ... We need to worry about whether or not it is polluting our lake."

Dunes City has been aware of the issue for the past month and has been investigating.

"We have received a response — not the property owner but the company," said City Administrator Jamie Mills, who also works as the code enforcement officer. "I will be entering my order, and it may include fines and penalties and that kind of thing. That will move forward. If they choose to appeal that order, it will be appealed to the city council."

But despite the calls to owners and management, the activities have continued.

"This has been nonstop," Johnson said. "The dogs are chasing the deer into the yard and the woods. Our house on the lake wasn't a short-term rental when we purchased it. Frankly, we wouldn't have purchased it if it was."

Councilor Duke Wells said he has visited the area on multiple occasions since the complaints have begun.

"At one time, I saw eight

cars, one boat trailer and one dune buggy trailer," he said. "If there was an emergency, there would be no getting out. I don't know how much I can say about these letters, but all I can say is that the response from the property owner is unacceptable, and the attitude and response of the property manager is unacceptable."

While the city is still working with the property managers, the council and staff looked at what could be done on a broader scale for short-term rental properties as a whole.

Jan and Greg Murphy, who run a local Airbnb on their property, were surprised by the behavior of the Cloud Nine residence.

"We've never had any problems like this," Greg said. "Clearly the people who are in charge of that property, or properties with issues, are not doing their jobs. Our Airbnb is on the same property as us, so we're present. And we don't allow more than four people. And we're here to enforce rules."

Jan added that their rental agreement stipulates that there should be no noise after 9:30 p.m.

"We have family property on Woahink that's been in the family since before Dunes City existed," said Von Helmuth, who also rents out his property for short-term rentals. While he currently lives in Idaho, "This has been for a limited number of people, no people during COVID and no dogs. We want to keep the property in the family. We don't want Dunes City ruined by unscrupulous property managers either."

Helmuth suggested that

the city look at possible regulations to preserve the quality of life for full time residents.

"We would suggest that the council check out places like Bend or Lake Tahoe to see what does and doesn't work," he said. "We really believe there needs to be a limitation on numbers of these short-term vacation rentals. It's got to have some teeth."

One short-term rental property owner stated how a property they owned in California was met with a host of restrictions by the city.

"They required a permit, for example," they said. "That permit requires you show a site plan, and an emergency evacuation plan. And they told you how many people could be at your property on an overnight basis. Time periods limited noise, and you were also required to have an inspection and they would provide you with a list of what needed to be inspected."

But Rich Olson, who owns Darlings Resort and Marina, cautioned against heavy restrictions.

"I would just say that Airbnb has been good for our business," he said. "To limit the tools, especially when businesses are having a hard time struggling to stay afloat — it eliminates the avenues for businesses to survive. If we want to look at doing something with B&Bs, let's look at dealing with individuals on an individual basis. Don't take it out on all of the people that use Airbnb as a tool to pay their property taxes for vacation homes and things of that nature."

Instead, Olson suggested that the city should focus on code enforcement.

"It would be no different than an unruly neighbor being loud and obnoxious and dirty, throwing their garbage all over the place," he said. "I don't see a differ-

ence in that aspect. Take it up with that individual or that property owner. Make them accountable."

However, Dunes City is limited in its capacity to enforce code, as it has no agreement with a municipal court judge to hear cases regarding code enforcement infractions. To be able to do that, Dunes City would have to amend its charter, which requires a city-wide vote.

In 2016, the city did put the question to residents in a measure Mayor Robert Forsythe called "critical to the existence of our city," but residents voted it down. That has restricted the legal authority of the city, which can often see code citations be delayed, or ignored altogether by residents.

The council instructed Mills to draft an ordinance as a jumping off point to have a more informed discussion on short-term rental restrictions.

"I think in drafting that ordinance, we need to consider what we heard tonight from those people who are already in Airbnb property," Mallen said. "It seems to be the one common denominator that they have in making them successful, is that their management companies are local. At least I get that impression. And I think part of the ordinance needs to be that the management company needs to be local. They need to be checked out, they need to be responsive and have a track record of that. We sure need to do something about that."

Forsythe agreed with the need to discuss the issue further, saying, "I expect that Jamie goes out, gathers up as much information as she can. We can get information from coastal towns like ours up and down the coast that allow regulations and present that to us in the next meeting"

Siuslaw News



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RESCUE from page 1A

"While our assets transited to the scene, three of the four stranded people were assisted to safety, leaving one person who was unable to make the transit safely and needed to be removed with rescue assistance," reported Station Siuslaw River.

After assessing the scene, the decision was made to launch a Rescue Helicopter from Newport, supported by U.S. Coast Guard Sector North Bend. Once on scene, the aircraft safely lowered a rescue swimmer to assess the condition of the patient, and then conducted a basket hoist of the patient and transferred him to the beach to be assessed by awaiting paramedics.

The individuals rescued were not identified and specifics of the incident

were not available as of press time.

Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, a member of WLFEA, applauded the team effort, which required close communication and coordination to accomplish the challenging rescue.

"As always, when it's time to help, we come together as a single entity. It was a good rescue," said Training Officer Pete Warren.

Station Siuslaw River stated, "A special thanks to all of our partner agencies in this well-orchestrated rescue."

Afterwards, Florence Mayor Joe Henry said, "Hats off to Coast Guard Station Siuslaw River and the other agencies that participated. We are very blessed to have you guarding our river and coastline. We are very proud to be a Coast Guard City."

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