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Pacific Seafood: Housing idea worries neighbors

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Last month, the city's Planning Commission unanimously approved the idea. On Tuesday, the City Commission held a public hearing for it.

"This doesn't solve our problem with short-term housing," resident Loren Gramson said. "This only benefits Pacific Seafood instead of the community (and would be) a return to the days of the company store."

Dixie Dowaliby, who lives nearby, questioned the plan's compatibility with nearby homes and whether it would affect the safety of neighborhood children.

"What are we not think-



Peggy Yingst/The Columbia Press

The Pacific Fabricators building off Northwest Warrenton Drive near 17th Place could be converted into an Alaska-style bunkhouse for Pacific Seafood employees.

ing about that we should be thinking about," she asked. "We should think outside of the box before we're stuck in a box we can't get out of."

Gil Gramson, who lives in a housing development he built adjacent to the pro-

posed project, suggested the city make it a conditional use in the zone instead of an outright use.

"Restaurants, hotels, they need housing too," he said. "This would set a precedent in any zone."

Commissioners agreed to continue the public hearing and requested the applicant spell out details of their plan, which would be posted on the city's website and Facebook page. The company would create a partnership agreement with neighbors.

A town hall meeting, in which residents can get information from the city and Pacific Seafood representatives, would be set shortly after Thanksgiving followed by a final hearing before the commission a few weeks later.

"We're building (houses) quicker than any other community and still we can't keep up," Mayor Henry Balensifer said. "This is bold experimentation. Just because it's new and scary doesn't mean we shouldn't try it."

In the past, cannery workers were longtime residents able to buy houses in town, Commissioner Pam Ackley said. Changing demographics requires a new way of looking at housing.

"We just need more information about how this will look in our community," Ackley said.

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