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# Vacation rental policy passes

## City Council approves ordinance in late-night session

By **Mike Lawrence**

Wednesday, July 25, 2007

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Steamboat Springs — At nearly 11:45 p.m. Tuesday, for good or ill, and putting at least a temporary end to months of debate, the Steamboat Springs City Council approved revisions to the city's vacation home rental ordinance with a 4-2 vote.

City Councilman Ken Brenner and City Council President Pro-tem Steve Ivancie voted against the ordinance, which Brenner called "reprehensible" and both men said will unjustifiably allow commercial rentals to continue and expand in residential

neighborhoods throughout Steamboat Springs. City Council President Susan Dellinger and council members Karen Post, Towny Anderson and Loui Antonucci supported the ordinance, which, despite nearly three hours of discussion and public comment, changed little from the latest draft prepared by city staff.

"This is part of how it's always been in Steamboat," Post said, citing years of vacation home rentals. "This is part of our economy."

The revised ordinance requires vacation home rental operators to pay a one-time application fee of \$500 and an annual permit renewal fee of \$50 per sleeping room. The ordinance allows a maximum of four vehicles to park at a vacation rental overnight, plus vehicles in garages, but sets no limit on the number of sleeping rooms in a rental. The ordinance sets a limit of 16 overnight guests.

Despite requests - and at least one threat of legal action - from current vacation home rental operators, the ordinance includes no "grandfather clause," instead requiring all existing and new vacation home rental operators to come into compliance with the new regulations by April 30, 2008.

The new ordinance also requires vacation home rentals that share a driveway or road access with another property to receive written permission from adjacent property owners for commercial use of the road access.

Attorney Bob Weiss, representing the Steamboat Springs Vacation Home Rental Alliance, said the access requirement could put 30 vacation home rentals out of business.

Vacation home rentals are homes in residential neighborhoods that are rented to short-term vacationers and sometimes used for private functions.

While the city first adopted a vacation home rental ordinance in 2001, the issue again arose in October 2006, when the Steamboat Springs Planning Commission

addressed complaints about vacation rentals from homeowners on Ridge Road and Meadow Lane.

In February, the City Council enacted a temporary ban on new vacation home rental permits, to address citizens' concerns and revise unclear sections of the original ordinance. In April, the City Council extended the ban to August 7.

Tuesday's meeting was the council's deadline for adopting a revised ordinance, in order to have the new ordinance in place before that permit ban expires.

Anderson said passing the ordinance, which imposes escalating fees for violations or non-permitted rentals and refers cases to municipal court, will provide a vital tool for administration of vacation home rentals in the future.

"At least what we've done is put the enforcement piece in place, so it doesn't come to us, it goes to municipal court," he said. "If we don't pass this, if we go back, are we going to go through all this brain damage again?"

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