

City Council wants consistent RV living ordinance

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Crescent City Councilors, seeking consistency and clarity, asked staff to create regulations for long-term RV living, that would cover granny flats, backyard cottages and other accessory-dwelling units at their April 6 regular meeting via Zoom.

City Public Works Director Jon Olson offered a look at short-term and long-term permits governing RV parking in residential areas. Both cases require the RVs to have a five-foot clearance on all sides, Olson said.

An over-the-counter permit is necessary for RVs parked on private residential property for less than 90 days, Olson said. Owner requirements would include:

- Use the right size electrical cord.
- Dispose of their sewage properly.
- Ensure the vehicle has clean water.

- Site inspections would not be necessary unless a nuisance complaint is filed.

Olson said greater scrutiny would go to RVs parked on residential property for more than 90 days. The owner requirement would change to:

- Have permanently installed water, sewer and electricity.
- Undergo architectural and a site plan review.
- Park the vehicle on gravel, concrete or another hard surface.
- Obtain a building permit and a use permit.

City Manager Eric Wier said connecting an RV to water and sewer would cost around \$3,300, or about a third of the cost for a residential home. Water and sewer connection fees are set by ordinance with most residential developers paying \$9,682 for sewer and \$2,700 for water, he said.

Olson added that with use and building permit fees, a resident could spend \$10,000 to house someone in an RV on their property for more than 90 days and the use permit would have to be renewed after a year. Olson said the water and sewer connection costs were initial fees and that monthly fees for those services would depend on usage.

Councilors were concerned with the high price of the fees, especially with \$3,300 just in connection fees.

Mayor Blake Inscore said property owners should be required to obtain the appropriate permits and do improvements to make sure their vehicle is properly connected to water, sewer and electricity. However, he added, unless someone was looking to rent the property out, he didn't think the connection fee was appropriate.

"I think that part of what we're doing with this is we're really beginning to weigh in on the accessory dwelling unit discussion, which we haven't really gotten into," Inscore said, adding that many tiny homes are on wheels and are often towed around, like RVs. "My concern is that we don't sway people from doing the right thing because they see the cost and they just go ahead with what they're going to do without us knowing."

Inscore explained that there should be consistency between the ordinance governing long-term RV living and accessory dwelling units.

"There's so much similarity here that I think we need to be researching this before we just simply say it's going to be this connection fee," he said.

Mayor Pro Tem Heidi Kime also expressed "sticker shock" with the connection fee, saying the issue of RVs came up during a discussion about overall housing.

"Councilors were concerned about an RV owner parking their vehicle at a family member's house and hooking their electricity up via an extension cord 'across the sidewalk,'" Kime said. "If someone is utilizing

this as a source of income, then a connection fee-type situation seems more appropriate. But, I don't know, \$3,300 just so that I can have someone stay in my driveway..."

Olson said the California Department of Housing and Community Development defines accessory dwelling units as a type of affordable home because they don't require paying for land or building major infrastructure.

He added there are limits to what cities can charge to connect an accessory dwelling unit to existing water and sewage and promised to research what those limitations are.

Inscore said there should also be discussion on how the city will enforce its rules governing both RVs and accessory dwelling units, especially since residents already live in RVs.

"How are we going to educate the public," he asked. "I would ask staff to look at some of that and when they bring it back, inform the public about these things and reach out to members of our city family who are already using RVs in a way that we are now going to set some specific guidelines for."