

'It gets a little messy': Short-term rentals now personal to councilman

BY NORM CANNADA
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SENECA — Once supportive of a proposed short-term rental ordinance currently before Seneca City Council, Councilman Stuart Pohl said he is now unsure how he will vote on the issue when it comes back for final reading.

Pohl said he has seen

short-term rentals first hand, as there are three rental homes on Shorecrest Drive, where he lives.



Pohl

"It gets a little messy, and it does detract from the neighborhood," Pohl said this week. "When this

subject first came up, I was one that was thinking, 'You know, my wife and I have talked about renting our house out in a few years.' We'd like to have the option to rent it out for football weekends while we go visit grandkids or whatever.

"But now, I'm beginning to see where these things are being purchased for full-time

rentals, so it's no longer just a random weekend," he added. "Everybody is running a business on our street. At first I was all fine with (the proposed ordinance), but now I don't know. It's a tough one."

No date has been set for a final reading on the proposed ordinance, and

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officials have said changes are still being considered. A draft presented last month would allow and regulate short-term rentals in the city. It would limit the number of people staying in a short-term rental to two people per bedroom up to a maximum of 12 people. It would also require one paved parking space onsite — not on the street — for each bedroom, and local management at all times.

While the issue was not on the agenda at council's monthly meeting this week, three residents who live near Pohl expressed concerns about the proposed ordinance, with some talking about the three homes on Shorecrest near Pohl's home.

David Wicker, who also lives on Shorecrest, asked for an amend-

ment to the proposed ordinance to suspend the owner of a rental's ability to rent for 12 months if the home has three reports of trash or noise validated by police within one year.

"Otherwise, the landlord has no real reason to comply with this ordinance, because there's no downside to them," Wicker said.

He also expressed concerns that renters "leave six or eight trash cans out on the street all week long," even though trash is only picked up once a week.

"It doesn't look like I believe Seneca wants its residential neighborhoods to look like," he said. "It looks like you're living in Brooklyn. It's very unsightly."

Mike White, who lives nearby on Point Road, told council he tried to get in touch with the owner of a short-term

rental home on Shorecrest and found the company it was listed under was in Atlanta. He said he wrote the rental company and received a response that the property had been sold and "they thought the owners might be in Florida."

"I'm here to tell you that as of (Tuesday) morning no one in this room knows who owns that house," White said. "Residents contribute to the community. We live here. The person in Florida is probably a heck of a person, too, and I'm sure they volunteer for a lot of things in their community. The difference is they live in Florida."

Nancy Johnston, who lives on Shorecrest, asked council to consider limiting "rental density" by setting a maximum number of homes on a street that could be used as short-term rentals.

"Just our little part of Shorecrest Drive is in

danger of losing our community because we have the potential of having that whole side of Shorecrest short-term rentals," she said. "Consider with short-term rentals what we are doing to our community and how we are going to protect the people who love living here, working here and contributing to the people that live here."

Mayor Dan Alexander and Seneca city administrator Scott Moulder said comments from residents are being considered in changes that may be made to the proposed ordinance before final reading.

"We have definitely been concerned about what people are saying," Alexander said. "We just want to make sure we pass something that would be in the best interest of the city."

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