

Two Harbors City Council Meeting, Second Petition Signing

By: Katee Rose

The Planning Commission met after the public hearing on April 25th and had a long discussion about short term rentals. They were able to come to a consensus and would like to move forward with the reviewed ordinance. "There were some tense moments and there were some not so tense moments, but we made it through," says one council member.

There were a few proposed minor adjustments made to the ordinance. The second reading of the short term rental ordinance was discussed along with concerns both the public and council had were addressed in the review. One change was to increase the days for the notice. Instead of 10 days, homeowners will be given 20 days to get the documents needed in by certified mail for notices that are in violation of the code.

They also decided to take the fixed cap away. Instead of a fixed number of short term rentals, it was proposed that short term rentals will be able to take up 4 percent of the total housing stock in the city. The permits will stay non transferable as required by state law and parking requirements will stay the same, requiring at least two off street spots available for renters. It also stayed determined that short term rentals were not to be allowed in residential zones moving forward. This will not affect current rental permit holders. These proposals for changes are now included in the second reading. After the second reading is accepted, there will be no more changes made. There will be a third and final reading of the ordinance before it is passed, and after 30 days it will be set into place. Mayor Swanson also suggested he would like to see this

ordinance be reviewed annually, as this is fairly new territory for the city to navigate. One resident spoke up urging the council to accept the ordinance and to put it in place asap.

As most of us have heard by now, there has been an increase in concern around the City of Two Harbors Mayor and how he has conducted business. Throughout the last several months there has been plenty of information surfacing to the public eye about his alleged violations of city code and charter, as well as misusing his mayoral title for his own personal or family gain.

Many Two Harbors residents want to use their voice to get answers around their concerns. A committee of diverse residents demanding transparency of the Two Harbors Mayor began collaborating to get a petition in order, offering the general public an opportunity to sign their name in verification that they too had concerns. The petition did quite well while circulating around the community, gathering almost 1000 signatures. The Resign or Recall Committee handed off the research and results of the petition to the Two Harbors City Council at the end of April. According to the petition committee with guidance from the Minnesota Secretary of State, they were under the impression that all signatures would be kept confidential. Although upon submission to the city, the privacy of signatures was called into question, subject to the Minnesota Data Practices Act. Several members of petition supporters were named in a lawsuit filed by Timothy Jezieski, which led the group to withdraw the recall petition and start all over again. This time they will not be able to guarantee ano-

nymity. Again, there will need to be 20 percent of the city's registered voters to initiate a recall election.

Timothy Jezierski, who is not a Two Harbors resident, and Jane and John Doe filed a lawsuit against five of the recall organizers, the Recall or Resign Committee, Two Harbors City Council, and Patricia Nordean (City Clerk) demanding the information from the petition be made public. The matter was sent to court and Judge Dale Harris had been assigned the case. Although, since the petition was withdrawn, there was nothing for Judge Harris to rule on. The City of Two Harbors has retained special counsel from a law firm out of the cities for guidance though this matter.

The Resign or Recall Committee is considering legal action against the City of Two Harbors to prevent the disclosure of the original petition to Mayor Swanson or anyone else.

In the meantime, Mayor Swanson has enabled an automated response on his email saying he will no longer be checking his emails and anyone with concerns can either call or write to city hall.

The Resign or Recall committee is pushing forward and would like to encourage residents of Two Harbors to come down to one of the petition sign drives or reach out to petition organizers to have their signature collected. More information on the second edition of the recall petition can be found on the committee's Facebook page, now entitled "Re-sign and Recall", or they can be reached at 218-206-6671.

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