

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE

Date and Time: Monday, January 16, 2023, at 5:15 pm, (Council Chambers)

Members Present: Lisa Rasmussen, Chad Henke, Doug Diny, Lou Larson, Becky McElhaney

Others Present: Nathan Miller, Ben Bliven, Jeremy Kopp, Tracy Rieger, Kaitlyn Bernarde, Mary Goede, Phil Rentmeester

Minutes of previous meetings. (12/19/22)

Chad Henke pointed out an error in the motion he made to approve the Electric Scooter ordinance, which should Doug Diny as the second instead of himself.

Motion by Larson, second by Diny to approve the minutes of the previous meeting with the correction. Motion carried 5-0.

Consider approval or denial of various license applications

Lisa Rasmussen indicated there was a denial recommendation for Elizabeth Gallion for a Public Transport Driver License. It was noted Elizabeth Gallion was not present.

Rasmussen stated the Liquor License Review Subcommittee met just before this meeting to review an application for a Class B Beer & Liquor License and the Plan of Operation of Szaltz, LLC for the premise at 525 Fulton Street. Taqueria Tres Hermanos is currently operating in that premise but is planning to relocate to another building on 6th Street. It will be closed for a period for remodeling and Szaltz plan to open in the spring. The application was unanimously recommended for approval.

Motion by Henke, second by Diny to approve or deny licenses as recommended by staff. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and possible action regarding adoption of the Marathon County all Hazards Mitigation plan 2022 update.

Rasmussen noted this item and the next are approved by this committee every so often on a cyclical basis.

Motion by Larson, second by Henke to approve the 2022 plan update. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and possible action regarding adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS)

Motion by McElhaney, second by Diny to approve. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and possible action on an Ordinance Amending Section 8.08.001 Definitions, Section 8.08.120 Number of dogs and cats limited, Section 8.08.270 Penalty; Creating Section 8.08.171 Permitting of commercial kennels, Section 8.08.172 Commercial kennel permit fees, Section 8.08.173 Permit application process, Section 8.08.174 General permit provisions, Section 8.08.175 Permit nonrenewal, suspension or revocation, Section 8.08.176 Abatement of nuisance at commercial kennel, Section 8.08.177 General facility standards, Section 8.08.178 Indoor facility standards, Section 8.08.179 Outdoor facility standards, Section 8.08.180 Enclosures, Section 8.08.181 Feeding and food receptacles

Nathan Miller explained he made some of the adjustments to the ordinance after committee discussion last month and a meeting with Humane Officer Ashlee Bishop. He stated he added that one of the conditions of granting the permit would be to provide a \$1 million liability insurance certificate, with the City of Wausau listed as an additional insured for notification purposes. He stated Bishop indicated there was one kennel in Wausau which requires their clients to provide proof of rabies vaccination and a negative Giardia test, and they felt that was a good idea. Another requirement was to have sufficient space of 14 sq ft per dog for an indoor and outdoor facility. He noted the Marathon County Humane Society is exempt from that requirement because the city contracts with them and it is not voluntary boarding.

Rasmussen noted the fee structure for compliance was set up for first, second, and third violations with progressively higher amounts. Miller stated there is also a process for suspension, revocation, or non-renewal. It was noted in the definition of commercial kennel the wording "including training for the purpose of hunting" will be added for clarification.

Motion by Larson, second by Diny to approve the ordinance permitting commercial kennels. Motion carried 5-0.

Discussion and possible action regarding Authorizing the amendment of fees to the City of Wausau Fees and Licenses Schedule adopted pursuant to Wausau Municipal Code §3.40.010(a) relating to commercial kennel permit fees.

Nathan Miller explained this is just to set the permit/license fee. Rasmussen stated last month they discussed mirroring the permit fee to match other municipalities. Miller indicated \$100 is what is being charged in the communities around Wausau. Rasmussen noted this brings consistency for the Humane Officer, who also serves Weston.

Motion by Larson, second by Henke to approve \$100 for the Commercial Kennel Permit/License fee. Motion carried 5-0

Discussion and possible action Amending Section 1.01.025 Issuance of citations; Repealing Section 2.20.045 Enforcement of certain property violations

Rasmussen stated several years ago the Housing Blight Task Force looked at the most commonly issued inspection violations, such as vehicle parked in the wrong space, campers parked on lawns, garbage cans left out, etc. A suggestion was made to create the conduit for inspection staff to have discretion to immediately ticket these violations without a warning letter or opportunity to self-correct. Inspections has found when they sent out a letter to a homeowner asking for compliance on certain things, many of them did self-correct on either the first or second visit.

Rasmussen stated Bill Hebert, Inspections Director, has indicated it is not used and he recommends they repeal it. She commented often people are a new resident and may not be aware of a particular ordinance, so to be met with an immediate citation isn't very welcoming as a community. Nathan Miller added it also wasn't used because it was actually more work for them even though it was an instant ticket, and he did not like that it did not allow for due process or a chance to self-correct. He stated they never use it and don't like using it and there already is an established process of writing warning letters before issuing a citation or summons & complaint.

Becky McElhaney stated she was all for giving people a chance but expressed she has received a lot of feedback from her constituents that sometimes a letter is sent, and they come back two weeks later and send another letter, taking a long period of time to get the compliance. She indicated she had no problem repealing this but suggested they consider shortening the time for compliance. She commented in many instances it is taking a whole summer to get some people to comply because there is two or three weeks between the compliance checks. She felt the warning process was too long and it was frustrating for those that follow the rules.

Miller explained to the committee the entire process currently used by the city for inspection violations. Discussion followed regarding allowing extensions. Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRtNCyb5bVU>

Motion by Diny, second by Henke to approve the ordinance repealing Section 2.20.045, Enforcement of certain property violations. Motion carried 5-0.

Operations Report from Fire Department December 2022

Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp noted it is a transitional year for the department with a lot of new hires starting in February. *Report placed on file.*

Wausau PD 2022 4th Quarter Operations Report and Tavern Activities Report – December 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022

Chief Ben Bliven commented he has previously talked about staffing levels and being understaffed because of a number of officers being in field training and our recruitment process. There are currently five officers in field training and five more that will be beginning recruit school next week, putting us essentially down 10 officers in our approximately 40 officer patrol bureau or a quarter of our staff. This has caused a strain on the team, specifically the patrol team working a lot of overtime. He did feel however, the contract negotiations that settled recently will assist in both retention and recruitment.

Bliven pointed out in the Investigative Bureau Report there were 36 total responses to drug overdoses in 2022, which is four less or about 10% reduction from 2021; nine of those overdoses were fatal compared to 12 fatal in 2021. The report also provided information regarding the costs for both on duty and off duty staff costs for special events.

Bliven stated they are working on developing a “Register A Camera Program” that is modeled after a program in Lacrosse. He explained it is a voluntary program for citizens that have home security cameras to allow them to notify the police they have them in the event we are looking for surveillance footage or witnesses in a specific case that may be helpful they can provide us that information. Typically, if there is a serious case in a neighborhood, we would canvass the neighborhood and go door-to-door knocking asking residents if they witnessed the crime or if they have security cameras. This program would allow us to execute that in a much faster more efficient manner by knowing where the cameras exist. He reiterated it is strictly voluntary and does not give us access to anyone’s cameras. Legal protocols still must be followed obtaining warrants and subpoenas, if necessary, if someone doesn’t want to give us those videos. *Report placed on file.*

Community Outreach Update Full presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRtNCyb5bVU>

Tracy Rieger, Outreach Coordinator, stated the numbers for December were in the meeting packet but she had one correction, the November number should be 193 instead of 220. There was a small increase in the unhoused population from November to December. She believed that number would continue to fluctuate month over month because it depends on people coming out of incarceration or from couch surfing. She noted in the month of December four additional unhoused individuals were housed with her assistance and some other partnering agencies. She pointed out there are a number of people in our community who are unhoused who are faced with some significant mental health and/or AODA issues that prevent them from seeking shelter indoors. She indicated case management is the biggest challenge for her. She stated she has started collaborating with Northcentral Health Care which has shown some positive results and hopes the momentum continues.

Becky McElhaney requested an elaboration of shelter rules and to publicly address the comments that people were turned away during the cold Christmas weekend.

Rieger indicated she could speak publicly about Catholic Charities rules because she used to be a part of it. She explained they are behavioral based, so there is a strike system put in place. When a guest comes in on intake, they review with the person who signs off on those rules, which are no weapons, no drugs, store things in a bin overnight, and be respectful of guests, staff & volunteers. She commented some people just can’t get a handle on that, whether they had a bad day, were using drugs, or had an issue with someone else there and their behavior got them kicked out. The three-strike policy is 10 days out for the first strike, 10 days out for the second strike, and 30 days out for the third; however, if it is 15 degrees or below outdoors Catholic Charities will raise that strike for the evening and allow them shelter. If they are turned away on a cold night, there is a process with the Salvation Army whereby they contact them to see if there is any bed space. They will also take the initiative to contact any other person, whether a friend or relative, to see if they can go there.

Rieger stated Salvation Army has a different subset of rules and they are a 90-day program-based shelter with some different expectations from Catholic Charities. Both shelters are considered low barrier, but Catholic Charities clients can stay there if they are sex offenders or have been using and come in intoxicated or altered in some way as long as they are able to self-care and be safe.

Rieger spoke to misinformation that people were turned away from the shelters during the Christmas holiday. She stated that was not accurate because the fact is that neither shelter was at capacity during that time. McElhaney wanted citizens to know there was room at the shelters to clear up any misconceptions because of media reports that they were full and turning people away. *Discussion followed.*

Communications

None

Adjourn

Motion by Henke, second by Diny to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:13 pm.