



Council Worksession  
July 12, 2022  
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas  
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle  
Councilmember Graeme Allen  
Councilmember Pam Axberg  
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth (attending remotely)

Absent:

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Ben Gozola

Guests in Attendance:

Review of Draft Ordinance 892: Residential Licensing Program Expansion

Gozola stated in February of this year, Council held a series of worksession meetings focused on various housing related issues including Accessory Dwelling Units, rental licensing of residential units, and licensing inspection procedures. As a result of those meetings and discussions, staff was directed to undertake a number of housing-related efforts including the preparation of an ordinance to require licensing of all rental dwelling units in the City. The July 12th work session will be used by staff to present an initial framework for expansion of the current program which currently applies only to buildings with three or more units.

Gozola explained Ordinance 892 will expand the current residential licensing and inspection program from the current 3+ unit threshold to all residential dwelling units in the community. Existing code language is light at times on important details, so this ordinance effort will provide the City with an excellent opportunity to keep what's working, to supplement with details where needed, and to reorganize as necessary for clarity. Staff provided details on the proposed draft Ordinance and requested comments or questions.

The Council discussed different rental scenarios which included how to manage when an individual rents to family members who then rent to non-family members.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas suggested a reference be made to the short-term rental policy within this Ordinance.

Councilmember Axberg stated some properties that are single-family homes or duplexes may have property managers when they are rented. She recommended property owner address information be updated upon the time when licenses are renewed versus within 30 days of an address change.

Councilmember Allen asked if the rental license calendar would be from April to April. Gozola stated staff was still considering this matter, but anticipated the rental license period would be for the calendar year.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas supported compost and organics recycling language being added to the Ordinance.

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Councilmember Abdulle cautioned the City from making this process too difficult because it may discourage homeowners from renting their homes. He questioned if federal fair housing guidelines had to be followed for rentals in the City. Gozola reported this language was included.

Councilmember Abdulle recommended the eviction language be reconsidered noting crime free lease language should be omitted. The Council agreed with this recommendation.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commented not all people renting their home may do this as a business. She discussed how she wanted formerly incarcerated individuals to be able to get through a background check. Massopust reviewed how serious felonies were triggered on background checks and other petty crimes were omitted.

Further discussion ensued regarding what would happen to tenants if a rental license was suspended and how concerns on a property would be remedied.

Councilmember Dunsworth asked if there was a state law that would apply to the evictions process. Massopust stated he was uncertain but noted he could speak to the legal team regarding this matter.

Councilmember Allen encouraged staff to speak with staff from Columbia Heights regarding their residential licensing program.

The Council supported language being added to address mold concerns within a property.

Councilmember Allen stated he supported properties being inspected once every three years if they were complying with the City's requirements.

Councilmember Abdulle commented on his experience living in rental properties and how items were only fixed prior to inspections and then sometimes items were not checked again for two or three years when the property was inspected again. For this reason, he supported rental properties being inspected every two years and suggested some inspections be done without notice.

Councilmember Axberg discussed how it was inconvenient to attend inspections every other year with her tenants in Coon Rapids.

Councilmember Dunsworth explained she owned a rental property in Minneapolis and she agreed inspections were inconvenient, but she believed they were good for her as a landlord because it builds a positive record. She recommended inspections be required as part of the City's residential licensing program. She asked if a renters rights meeting should be hosted at the Community Center to assist with educating renters in the community. Massopust reported the City could partner with Homeline to provide this kind of training.

Gozola thanked the Council for their feedback. He noted he would continue to work on this Ordinance and would report back to the Council at a future worksession meeting.

Worksession adjourned at 6:29 pm

Respectfully submitted,

*Terri Spangrud*

Terri Spangrud  
City Clerk

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