

Short-term rental ordinance proposed for Clinton's Olde Towne

By Randy Bell

Clinton aldermen are considering an ordinance to regulate short-term rentals in Olde Towne after a developer proposed moving five railroad cabooses to a vacant lot near the north end of Jefferson Street to offer “unique” accommodations for people visiting the city.

Brian Biernat said the cabooses would be painted and retrofitted with modern conveniences, including TVs and queen beds.

“The goal would be to put them in and make it a nice, attractive place for people to come in and stay,” Biernat said. His company has twenty-one other short-term rentals in the Jackson metro, but this would be the first time he’d be using cabooses for that purpose. The company caters to corporate clients, but he says it’s also family-friendly. His Clinton

development, called Project Tyco, is aimed at “filling a void” in the city’s short-term rental market. He envisions people staying in one of his cabooses for anywhere from four days to a month—maybe longer. But the ordinance the Board is considering would limit stays to fewer than thirty days.

Nearby residents have voiced opposition to the project.

Sara Wolfe said the idea of renting out cabooses could be “pie in the sky.” She said, “I don’t know that it’s a proven concept.” And she’s worried about the possible impact on the quality of life in the neighborhood.

“In this particular case, that five of them are grouped together, I think is a little concerning from a security standpoint.” She said there would be a constant turnover of people moving in and out

of those accommodations.

Wolfe has gotten more than fifty signatures on a petition expressing concerns about Project Tyco.

Ward 2 Alderman Jim Martin said the most important part of a zoning ordinance is “to protect the next-door neighbor.”

“I’m not going to vote in favor of anything that I would not want to be next door to me,” Martin said. “I think we need to be careful with short-term rentals, that we really do have support of the neighbors where something like that is going in, rather than opening up the city, or even an area of the city, without making sure that the citizens who own property or live next door to it think that’s compatible with where they live.”

There’s also concern among Board members about what seems to be a prevalence of Airbnb-type accommoda-

tions that are available all across Clinton, even though they’re not authorized under the current City ordinance.

“Airbnb is a short-term rental,” said Martin. “There are some folks getting away with that. If we want to permit Airbnb rentals citywide, then we need to look at that, too. What’s being proposed now are just short-term rentals in the Olde Towne district.”

Alderwoman-at-Large Ricki Garrett said it’s hard to determine the location of those Airbnb offerings in Clinton.

“When you look on an Airbnb site, it doesn’t tell you the address of the property. So, unless you know that particular house, you’d have to really go looking for it.”

The Board took a close look at the proposed ordinance at its work session on May 16 and suggested a number of changes.



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