

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES PUBLIC FORUM MINUTES

Thorold City Hall – Zoom Meeting
April 6, 2021

PRESENT: Councillor Wilson (Chair), Councillor Sentance, Mayor Ugulini, Councillor Dekker, Councillor Longo, Councillor Neale

ABSENT: Councillor DeRose, Councillor Handley, Councillor Kenny

STAFF: M. Corbett, C. McIntosh, J. Simpson, M. Watson

OTHERS: Giovanni Gregorio

1 CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.

2 RESIDENTIAL RENTAL LICENSING

Mr. Gregorio stated that he received an application for the Residential Rental Licensing a few weeks ago. He was unaware of the licensing requirement prior to receiving the letter. He purchased the home as a long-term rental investment 15 years ago and kept it as a single-family dwelling. Unlike others that convert single-family dwellings into multi-residential homes and charge high costs. He stated that other 2 bedroom homes are being rented at a rate of \$1,300-\$1,500, which is more than what he charges.

Mr. Gregorio stated that he charges a rate of \$950 plus utilities for his rental property and believes the Rental Licensing Fee should not be applicable to his rental. He asked that the licensing fee be waived to help maintain an affordable place to live.

Councillor Sentance asked the Chief Building Official provide comment on Mr. Gregorio's presentation. The Chief Building Official stated that all rental properties in the City of Thorold require a Residential License. The by-law was implemented in 2017 by the previous Council. Further amendments to the by-law are at the discretion Council.

Councillor Longo commented if Council were to make an exception for this property, where would the line be drawn for other people that wanted to have the licensing fee waived. Mr. Gregorio stated that anyone that converts their single-family dwelling into a multi-unit dwelling should have to pay this fee. Further, there are many people that are charging reasonable rent and should not have to pay this fee. In addition, Mr. Gregorio would have to hire an electrician, at a potential cost of \$100-\$150 and increase insurance to \$2,000,000 from \$1,000,000 on a small home. He will have to raise the rent to cover the costs.

Councillor Wilson asked Staff what steps need to be taken to reconsider the current by-law and what would be necessary to make amendments. Mayor Ugulini commented that amendments have been made to the by-law and asked for Staff comment. The Chief Building Official stated Council may direct amendments to the by-law, but a reconsideration of the entire by-law would need to be researched by the Clerk.

Councillor Dekker asked Councillor Wilson to clarify what changes she would like to consider. Councillor Wilson stated that she was asking what the process would be to change the existing by-law, and the options available.

The Chief Building Official commented that the by-law cannot discriminate by tenancy, for example, the Rental License cannot only apply to student rentals.

Council Wilson asked Staff about the types of rentals, relating to the number of occupants. The Chief Building Official clarified if there are more than 4 rooms or more than 10 people residing in a rental, there are different regulations. The classification would be a boarding house instead of a single detached dwelling and there would be additional safety measures.

Councillor Wilson asked if there is the option to exempt single-family homes from the rental licensing process and only apply the fee to multi-dwelling rentals. The Chief Building Official stated that it is the discretion of Council to make amendments to the by-law. In addition, he commented he would provide a report to Council prior to making amendments to the by-law.

Councillor Neale suggested that an Affordable Housing exception be examined to add to the by-law. For example, any rent below \$1,000 for a single tenant be exempted from the Rental Licensing Fee.

Councillor Longo stated that he was on the previous Council when the by-law was implemented. He feels that Council cannot discriminate because someone pays less in rent because the license is meant as a safety measure. Councillor Longo does not want to reconsider this by-law and will not support a by-law that discriminates against one rental over another.

Mayor Ugulini stated that the City of Thorold Rental Licensing By-law has been implemented in other municipalities because of its effectiveness. It is normal to make amendments to improve the by-law, but making exceptions has the ability to create problem. He added that there are

efforts being made for Affordable Housing units that are multi-unit buildings that are not applicable to the Residential Licensing Fee.

Mr. Gregorio stated that the house is a single-family dwelling and has not changed structurally since built. If he were to reside in the house, the electrical inspection component would not be necessary. Finally, he questioned why the inspection is every 2 years.

The Chief Building Official stated Council deemed it reasonable to have a bi-annual renewal term for ease to the property owner. In addition, the fees are required due to the cost of inspections completed by the by-law officers at the time of renewal.

Councillor Wilson stated that a property owner could not discriminate against a tenant, much as Council cannot discriminate to whom the by-law applies.

Councillor Wilson stated that there are no meeting recommendations for Council. This Public Forum is for information only. Council can decide to request a report from Staff regarding ways to improve the Residential Licensing By-law.

Victoria Wilson, Councillor

Carrie McIntosh, Deputy City Clerk