

NFB General Meeting - June 7, 2016

Called to order in the gymnasium at Stallings Center at 7:16 PM.

Jared Munster, the director of Safety and Permits, spoke to the group about how the city is working to enforce the new regulations on short term rentals. He said they have received around 4400 applications for permits and have issued around 2000, with about 500 still pending. For the Bywater in specific he said they received 517 applications and 280 permits were issued. So far they had issued 382 violations city-wide, and 438 notices were issued. The first hearing for a violation is scheduled for June 21, where the fines are determined. It can be up to \$500 a day per offense. Dr. Munster said he thinks it will probably be around \$200 for first time offenses, plus the \$75 processing or administrative fee. For subsequent offenses, the fines may go up as high as \$500. Finally, If violators do not comply the city can ultimately opt to turn off electricity and gas to the property. An attendee raised concerns about this being a violation of civil liberties but the discussion was directed back to enforcement. It is required that permits are visible from the right of way on the front of the property, usually put in a window. Not posting the permit, failure to apply for a permit, or continuing to operate an STR after applying and not being eligible are all ways to get a violation. Permits show the number to call if neighbors want to report violations or issue complaints. It takes about three weeks for adjudication and violators have 2 weeks to comply. Violations are visible on the city's web site, as well as information on all properties applying for permits and the status of applications. (<https://data.nola.gov/Housing-Land-Use-and-Blight/Map-of-Short-Term-Rental-Licenses/j5u3-2ueh>) or onestop.app.nola.gov.

STR permits cost \$200 a year for an "accessory rental" (full time, owner on site). Temporary STR permits are \$150 with a homestead exemption and \$300 without a homestead exemption. These kinds of rentals are for 90 days a year maximum, with or without the owner on site, and can be full homes. Commercial licenses are \$500 a year. Whole buildings can be used as full time STRs in non-residential zoning districts (we have some in Bywater). Applications can be filed through the AirBnB site, the OneStop App, and in person at City Hall.

Dr. Munster also gave this additional information on STRs: There is no cap on the number allowed. The entire unit must be rented to a single party (which doesn't prohibit unrelated people from joining up to make a single reservation). There is a limit of 2 people for each bedroom. It is virtually impossible to research how many listings are run through Craigslist.

AirBnB, HomeAway, and VRBO are all sharing data with the city as they are required to do with the new regulations. The platforms show a breakdown of nights (but not of prices) so that they can be reviewed by Safety and Permits. If they see an STR with a temporary license go over the allotted 90 days a violation may be issued. STRs have to be tied to a platform for this data to be collected and available to the city - that is to say Craigslist and word of mouth cannot be tracked. The vast majority of STRs use platforms that share data, but multiple concerns were raised and it was acknowledged that the system is not perfect. One attendee raised concerns about adequate public representation in the transition period and the cosmetic appearance of permits on historic homes.

Options to report problems with an STR are emailing str@nola.gov, calling (504) 658-7144, or through the OneStop App (<https://www.nola.gov/safety-and-permits/report-a-violation/>). The OneStop option can be anonymous. Including photos, videos, and as much information as possible is encouraged. The office currently has a staff of 9, and are allocated for 11. They send

out an inspector, and so far have often been working until around midnight. Police should still be called when appropriate, such as with noise complaints or any situation that could be dangerous.

LaToya Cantrell, current council member for District B, was in attendance and spoke to the group about her plans to run for mayor. The primary is October 14th, runoff November 18th. The qualifying period is July 12-14. The first of many meetings she has planned to discuss her platform is scheduled for June 13th. Councilmember Cantrell discussed the biggest concerns of residents she has heard concerns from. Crime and infrastructure are the main concerns. She said she hears many residents feel that they are being priced out of the city, and some residents feel their concerns may not be adequately heard by city government. She said morale is low in law enforcement and big changes are needed there. It was suggested by an attendee that the current mayor's authority over the Police Department may have been problematic, and Councilmember Cantrell said she would like to suggest a change to the city charter so the Police Chief is publicly elected. It was suggested that she schedule some of her upcoming meetings in historic core neighborhoods, as they will have specific concerns that may not be brought up in other meetings. She assured as that because District B, her own district, is made up largely of historical neighborhoods, she is very familiar with these concerns.

Valerie Bouldin, the Neighborhood Liaison for the Mayor's Office, introduced the group to Melody Chang, the Junior Project Manager of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Coordination. She discussed their plan to reduce the jail population and handed out applications to join their Community Advisory Group (available online here: https://www.nola.gov/getattachment/Criminal-Justice-Coordination/SJC-Community-Advisory-Group-Application_FINAL.pdf/). New Orleans got a 1.5 million dollar grant from the MacArthur foundation "to reduce the jail population 21% by mid 2018, and reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the criminal justice system." The Community Advisory Group is being created to be a "citizen task force for accountability", which would hold judges and other officials accountable for their efforts to implement strategies to improve the criminal justice system that they agreed to in 2015. These strategies apply to our local jail, where people are technically still innocent while they await trial. Part of the strategy is to determine who should be in the jail, depending on whether they are a risk or not.

Valerie Bouldin then distributed handouts regarding lead in the water system. The New Orleans public water supply tests far below the maximum safe levels for lead set forth by the EPA. She reminded us that the S&WB will come inspect the pipes leading to the house for free and replace them if they are lead or if they leak. They will also meet with you and your plumber to make sure any work proposed is adequate and fair. The fire department is continuing a citywide push to install free smoke detectors for residents (<https://www.nola.gov/nofd/citizen-services/free-smoke-detector-installation/>).

Meeting ended at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Tyler Harwood
co-secretary