

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3rd Floor,
1528 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

1/8/2024 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Mayor Mike Thoms, Alderpersons Moses Robinson, Randy Hurt, Judith Gilbert, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, and Bill Healy.

Alderman Hurt arrived at 5:35 p.m.

Absent: None.

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Public Comment

No one from the public was signed up to speak.

4. Presentations

a. Rental Housing Registration Program.

CED Director Miles Brainard gave an overview of the Rental Housing Registration Program. The rental housing registry or rental ordinance has been around since 2004. Its purpose is to have safe rental housing that meets the minimum code. Mr. Brainard explained the registration process, fee schedule and frequency of inspections. There are three housing and property maintenance inspectors who are responsible for doing the rental inspections as well as general property maintenance. The staffing levels have varied over time, with a significant period of being understaffed.

Tenant complaints are a big part of the program. Occasionally there is a dispute between the tenant and landlord that does not involve the actual building code issues, but is more of a civil matter. In these cases, the inspectors are not mediators and do not get involved. Similarly, there are issues of retaliation, but that is not within the purview of this ordinance. Evictions due to severe code violations are rare, but staff will make every effort to refer them to appropriate resources when it does occur.

About two thirds of the housing in Rock Island was built before 1960 and approximately 38% of housing are rentals. Most of the rental units are assumed to be older and deteriorated, thus requiring inspections every year or every other year. Assuming all units need an annual inspection, that is forty inspections per inspector per week. An ideal rental inspection takes approximately thirty minutes. Based on this, each inspector would be spending half of every week just on inspections. Many of the rental units are falling into the annual inspection cycle per the standards of the ordinance at present, which has made it difficult to catch up. The code enforcement process can be quite complicated with the different views of the tenants and landlords. Staff has had to change priorities or look at other things within the scope of their overall responsibilities at times, which has reduced the function of this program.

The good news is the trend is moving in the right direction and more inspections are being done. They have implemented and will continue to implement streamlining processes with simpler inspection forms and processes for going through enforcement. They are hoping new software tools will also help with this process. One thing to consider is whether the frequency of inspections should be changed. This is also a good time to look at the fee structure.

b. Proposed Changes to the Liquor Code.

City Attorney Leslie Day reviewed the revisions made to the Liquor Code. The main revisions are as follows:

- The elimination of the Commission, with the authority to make decisions vested solely in the Commissioner;
- Changing the residency requirement from 25 miles to 35 miles and cleaning up language around ineligibility and locations so it is more in line with state law;
- Getting rid of the signature requirement and instead implementing a new procedure to notify nearby property owners of a pending liquor application;
- New classes of licenses and options, including outdoor use, widening of the special events license, a class that encompasses establishments that are not bars or restaurants, and a caterer's license for establishments outside of the City limits;
- Caps on certain licenses, including taverns and liquor/convenience stores. This does not limit existing licensed business nor the purchaser of licensed business. The Commissioner may grant additional license based on public convenience and the best interest of the City;
- Updated fee schedule - classes and options;
- A hearing procedure for a denial of an application or decision not to renew a license;
- A requirement that ID Scanners and cameras be used for those with an extended hours option; and
- A requirement that prior to the renewal or granting of an application, the license holder does not owe any taxes, fines, fees, or judgments, to the City.

The City's moratorium expires on March 31, 2024. The goal is to have this placed on the January 22, 2024 Council Agenda. Attorney Day requested that any further comments or revisions be sent to her by January 12, 2024 so she can review them and make necessary changes.

5. Adjourn

a. Motion to Adjourn.

Motion:	Motion whether or not to adjourn.
VV	Voice vote is needed.

Aldersperson Poulos moved to adjourn the Study Session; Aldersperson Parker seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 7-0 voice vote: Aye: Poulos, Healy, Hurt, Gilbert, Swanson, Parker, Robinson. Nay: None

The meeting adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Colleen Skolrood, Executive Assistant.