



WASHOE COUNTY

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STAFF REPORT

BOARD MEETING DATE: March 26, 2024

DATE: February 28, 2024

TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Darin Balaam, Washoe County Sheriff

SUBJECT: Public hearing, second reading, and adoption of an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) and Chapter 70 (Vehicles and Traffic) by adding new sections regarding: camping on County-owned properties or public places within 1000 feet of the Truckee River (50.400); use of fires, blow torches, and/or propane tanks (50.500); parking of oversized vehicles on public property (70.391); obstructive uses of public sidewalks, roads, and/or highways prohibited (70.392); ride solicitation and contribution from driver/occupant of vehicle prohibited (70.393); human habitation of vehicles on County-owned properties or public places (70.411); and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

(Sheriff's Office.) FOR POSSIBLE ACTION.

SUMMARY

The proposed ordinance seeks to add new sections to Washoe County Code ("WCC") Chapters 50 and 70 regarding: camping (50.400); uses of fires, blow torches, and/or propane tanks (50.500); parking vehicles on public property (70.391); human habitation of vehicles on public property (70.411); obstructive uses of public sidewalks, roads, and/or highways (70.392); and solicitation of rides, business, and/or contribution from vehicles' drivers and/or occupants (70.393).

Washoe County Strategic Objective(s) supported by this item: Vulnerable Populations and Economic Impacts

PREVIOUS ACTION

On February 20, 2024, the Board conducted a first reading and introduction of Bill Number 1904, an ordinance which sought to amend WCC Chapters 50 and 70 by adding a new section regarding: camping (50.400); uses of fires blow torches, and/or propane tanks (50.500); parking vehicles on public property (70.391); human habitation of vehicles on public property (70.411); obstructive uses of public sidewalks, roads, and/or highways (70.392); and solicitation of rides, business, and/or contribution from vehicles' drivers

AGENDA ITEM # _____

and/or occupants (70.393). The Board set this matter for public hearing, second reading, and possible adoption on March 12, 2024.

On December 14, 2022, the Board approved a request by the Sheriff, through the Washoe County Clerk, and pursuant to WCC 2.030, to initiate amendments to WCC primarily to update provisions relating to camping and storage of personal property in public areas. The amendments were being requested to add a section governing unauthorized camping and storage of personal property which may pose a risk of significant harm to any person, or public area; and to update a section governing the penalties; and direct the County Clerk to submit the request to the District Attorney for preparation of a proposed ordinance in accordance with WCC 2.040.

BACKGROUND

The proposed amendments and adoptions to the WCC are intended to address the many issues related to public safety and health encountered by the Washoe County Sheriff's Office ("WCSO"), local businesses, and partnering agencies on a regular basis.

The primary objective of the WCSO is to offer services and assist those experiencing homelessness through a boots-on-the-ground approach. However, this primary objective must be achieved with public health and safety in mind.

Truckee River Corridor

The proposed increase of the Truckee River Corridor to 1,000 feet and prohibiting camping within 1,000 feet of the shore of the Truckee River is imperative to preserve the health of the river, as well as the safety of the public. This amendment of the corridor to 1,000 feet would reflect the actual high-water mark of the river.

Parking and Vehicles

Parking of oversized vehicles and trailers on public and residential streets interferes with the normal flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic. It can create visual obstacles and reduces lines of sight for driveways, intersections, and traffic signage, thereby reducing sidewalk and street safety. Further, parking of oversized vehicles and trailers on residential streets reduces fire and emergency access. Recreational vehicles hold large quantities of gasoline, propane, waste, and garbage, which creates a public health and safety concern.

Human habitation of vehicles on County-owned properties or public places and obstructive uses of public areas additionally interferes with the normal flow of vehicle and pedestrian traffic; can create visual obstacles; reduces lines of sight for driveways, intersections, and traffic signage; reduces fire and emergency access; and causes public health and safety concerns related to bodily fluids and waste, garbage, and litter. The WCSO expends a tremendous amount of resources attempting to address known habitation of vehicles on County-owned properties or public places and there is currently no legal recourse available to law enforcement to address this issue. Therefore, the adoption of ordinances to provide law enforcement with the tools needed to address these public safety and health concerns is necessary.

Ride Solicitation

Individuals who solicit rides or business from vehicles on or near public streets often impede traffic flow and cause serious safety concerns related to the individual, the vehicle, and all other nearby vehicles and pedestrians. This solicitation is a daily recurring obstacle faced by the WCSO.

Use of Fire

The use of propane tanks, blow torches, and fires on County-owned properties or public places have recently increased and causes public safety concerns for the people and property of Washoe County. Throughout the country, there have been numerous events related to the improper use of blow torches, propane tanks, and fires that have caused substantial bodily harm to individuals, death, and extensive property damage.

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board hold a second reading and adopt an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) and Chapter 70 (Vehicles and Traffic) by adding new sections regarding: camping on County-owned properties or public places within 1000 feet of the Truckee River (50.400); use of fires, blow torches, and/or propane tanks (50.500); parking of oversized vehicles on County-owned properties or public places (70.391); obstructive uses of public sidewalks, roads, and/or highways prohibited (70.392); ride solicitation and contribution from driver/occupant of vehicle prohibited (70.393); human habitation of vehicles on County-owned properties or public places (70.411); and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.

POSSIBLE MOTION

If approved, a possible motion might be:

“Move to adopt Ordinance No. _____ [insert Ordinance No. provided by County Clerk], an ordinance amending Washoe County Code Chapter 50 (Public Peace, Safety and Morals) and Chapter 70 (Vehicles and Traffic) by adding new sections regarding: camping on County-owned properties or public places within 1000 feet of the Truckee River (50.400); use of fires, blow torches, and/or propane tanks (50.500); parking of oversized vehicles on County-owned properties or public places (70.391); obstructive uses of public sidewalks, roads, and/or highways prohibited (70.392); ride solicitation and contribution from driver/occupant of vehicle prohibited (70.393); human habitation of vehicles on County-owned properties or public places (70.411); and all matters necessarily connected therewith and pertaining thereto.”