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Oakwood delays action on residential parking Ordinance

Proposal would limit residents to four cars in front yard.

A proposal to limit parking in the front of houses in Oakwood will get further study from the city's planning commission.

The board voted Monday night to postpone giving Oakwood City Council a recommendation on a proposed change to city code that limits the number of vehicles residents can park in their front yards to four and requires residents to park them on either concrete or asphalt.

The planners decided instead to hold a work session to study the issue further, including looking at how other area governments address the matter. A date for that meeting will be set later.

"We want to clean up the city, but we also don't want to run people off or overburden people," Commissioner Robert Pinion said.

One issue that Sheri Millwood, the commission chairwoman, raised was that a family of five conceivably could have five vehicles at the front of its house.

"You don't want to live somewhere where there are 10 vehicles ... so there has to be some answer," she said.

Mayor Lamar Scroggs has said the code change particularly would target residents who regularly keep cars parked, including broken-down ones, in streets, front yards, "driveways and everywhere else."

"We're not trying to stop people from having a gathering or party," he said. "That's just a one-time deal."

In his presentation on the matter Monday, City Manager Stan Brown showed photo after photo of cars strewn across front yards in various neighborhoods across the city.

"If it gets muddy, then you get mud out in the road and (cars) start tearing up the yard," he said. "It's one of those things that can lead to blight in a neighborhood."

"Based on this being an issue, the council, particularly the mayor, wants us to do something."

Brown acknowledged, however, the issue opens debate on whether “this is government’s role to control use of property or whether we have a free-for-all and let everybody do what they want to do.”

Commissioner Pat Jones said her initial reaction to Brown’s presentation was “I’d hate to live next to one of those houses,” but she wondered how the city would keep up with enforcement.

“When we get a complaint about something or when we ride by and see something, we’d have to start tracking it just like we are (with) vacant buildings,” Brown said.

Ultimately, the commission can only make recommendations to the Oakwood City Council, which has the final say on matters.

The proposed changes are part of an ordinance, which requires a public hearing and two votes of approval before its enacted.

The ordinance also bans parking or storage of recreational vehicles on vacant residential lots.

In residentially zoned areas, recreational equipment, such as boats, boat trailers, travel trailers, RVs, pickup campers or coaches, motor homes, tent trailers may be parked or stored only in side or rear yards, carports or in an enclosed building.

Parking or storage of commercial vehicles also is banned on any vacant residential lot, and residents can’t park or store commercial vehicles or school buses in front yards in residential areas.