

TERM OF COMMISSION: October Session of the August Adjourned Term

PLACE OF MEETING: Roger B. Wilson Boone County Government Center  
Commission Chambers

PRESENT WERE: Presiding Commissioner Don Stamper  
District I Commissioner Karen M. Miller  
District II Commissioner Skip Elkin  
County Planner Thad Yonke  
Health Department Director Stephanie Browning  
Environmental Health Manager Gerry Worley  
Deputy County Clerk Shawna Victor

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 p.m.

**Subject: Public Hearing for the purpose of taking comment from Grass Root Organization (GRO)**

Commissioner Stamper stated the sole purpose of this meeting is to hear comments from GRO and to take public comment on mobile home parks conditions.

A few weeks ago, the Commission was contacted by Mary Hussman on behalf of the Grass Roots Organization with concerns for the standards and issues related to mobile home parks in Boone County. The Commission agreed to hold this public hearing based upon the first contact from Ms. Hussman. The purpose of this hearing is to provide the Commission with public input on concerns that exist relative to neighborhoods that are trailer parks in nature. The Commission will proceed by introducing Ms. Hussman and asking for a presentation on her behalf. After that presentation, the floor will be opened for public comment. Public comment should be focused to the Commission and in the nature of citing concerns and raising questions. He requested a three to five minute format for the comments. The Commission has set aside two hours for this deliberation, if comments are not concluded in two hours; a decision will be made at that time as to how to further proceed.

The Commission will not make a decision at this hearing on any action. This is a public comment opportunity and the Commission will then take into consideration the comments made for review on this issue.

Commissioner Stamper requested all comments be directed to the Commission and no dialogue or debate between audience members.

Mary Hussman, 5306 Rice Road, Columbia, thanked the Commission for or the opportunity to come before you this evening. We are presenting draft ordinances to help residents of Boone County mobile home parks live a safer and healthier life.

GRO-Grass Roots Organizing, is a not-for profit organization. GRO's mission is to create a voice for individuals and communities in the pursuit of economic justice and human rights. This goal enables us to advocate in a variety of areas that effect low-income families, such as health, safety and housing issues.

In the Fall of 2001, we became involved in assessing Boone County mobile home parks because we received calls and complaints from individuals and families that were living in them. Residents knew they were living under conditions that just weren't safe, but, because of the fear of eviction, they were afraid to speak out. We feel this fear was and is legitimate. We worked to correct some of the worse conditions, but made little progress. Therefore, this summer, we decided to grade, from a layperson's point of view, the general appearance of each of the 25 mobile home parks in Boone County. We checked lighting, roads, road signs, and the presence and condition of children's playground areas. We documented any abandoned trailers, tires, appliances, junk, unmarked holes or hazardous situations like cans of paint or chemicals left about, unfenced or unmarked sewer lagoons, stagnant water and the height of weeds. I wish to stress that we did find many excellent and good parks in Boone County. However, we also found places that were not at all nice or safe places to live. After issuing an initial grade report in August, we said that we were willing to tell owners or their managers why they got the grades they did and that we would be willing to re-grade if the owner or manager requested this. We subsequently re-graded six of the parks. Tonight we are presenting to you the final grades.

We are also presenting to you information on the amount of lot rent payments. This information was requested from us by the Columbia / Boone County Board of Health Members. They heard from an owner his lot rent would be raised if he were asked to improve his 'F' graded Park and they wanted to know how the lower and upper graded Parks compared in cost. As you can see, there isn't much difference in the amount of lot rent charged in an 'A's or 'F' park. The Mobile Parks Action Community Team (MPACT) Information Sheet was submitted to the Public Record.

This grading was done to the best of their ability. Not all owners or managers wanted to speak with them about this. Either they spoke with a resident or owner or manager.

Now, we will present the 16 proposed reforms and the reasons that we believe the County Commissioners should pass them. All of the proposals came from talking to residents themselves. The 'D' or 'F' Parks would have to change and meet these basic requirements. These ordinances assure that residents of Boone County shall be protected with a certain standard of living decency. Stronger laws might be needed later, but these measures are an excellent start.

Sonja Barnes, 5113 Georgetown Drive, Columbia, read Proposal #1. When work is being done in a Boone County Mobile Home Park, holes in the ground must be clearly marked as a dangerous area and residents should be notified of the work and approximately how

long the construction conditions will exist.

This has been proposed because of the safety of the children. The notification should be given of construction so daily routines are not interrupted.

Victoria Neill, 205 Park DeVille Drive, Columbia read Proposal #2. Within one (1) year, all Boone County Mobile Home Parks shall establish and maintain a street numbering system which permits clear identification of each Mobile Home space. The mobile home owner shall clearly display the appropriate number on the Mobile Home space or affixed to the mobile home using reflective material.

This has been proposed because it is easier for many to find the correct mobile home for visitors and local emergency workers.

Ms. Neill read Proposal #3. All Boone County Mobile Home Parks shall be furnished with sufficient electrical systems and lighting units at the owner's expense to provide adequate levels of illumination that will provide better safety conditions during the hours of darkness.

This has been proposed because the lighting will make the parks safer.

Sue Hepworth, 302 Sanford, Columbia, read Proposal #4. Roads should be kept in good repair in all Boone County Mobile Home Parks.

This has been proposed for the safety for residents of the parks, walking and driving.

Kari Burley, 5055 W. Providence Road, Lot #108, Columbia, read Proposal #5. All managers, security or maintenance personnel must have a criminal background check done before hire. No person convicted of child molestation or child/adult abuse (with or without stalking) should be allowed to be the manager, maintenance man, security guard or in any position of authority over residents at any Boone County Mobile Home Park.

She noted the manager of her park has been convicted of abuse and child molestation. She lives in fear for her life and the lives of her children.

Commissioner Stamper noted the Commission will not be dealing with personality issues.

Gloria Curtis, 279 Chris Drive, Rock Bridge, Missouri, read Proposal #6. All abandoned trailer(s) should be sealed. All abandoned trailers should be removed from the property within one year of abandonment. All abandoned cars should be removed from the property within 60 days. All unoccupied structures should be locked/sealed.

This has been proposed because they are an eye sore and a danger to children. Criminal activities also take place in abandoned homes.

Jeffrey Johnson, 307 Trinity Place, Columbia, read Proposal #7. Owners will give all residents a copy of their lease and Rules/Regulations of the Park. Residents have a right to receive a written copy of all the Rules and Regulations that govern the Park prior to signing the Lease. Owners must give 30 days written notice of any changes or additions to the Park Rules or Regulations. Anyone who owns their home should be allowed to have at least a six-month lease.

This has been proposed because many mobile home park residents have never received a copy of any rules or regulations and sometimes rules and regulations change without notification of the residents.

Mr. Johnson reads Proposal #8. Within one year all Boone County Mobile Home Parks shall erect and maintain speed limit signs in all Boone County Mobile Home Parks.

This has been proposed to let people know people need to slow their speed. Mobile Home Parks' streets are usually narrow and curvy and also serve as sidewalks to the residents.

John Lillard, 1201 Paquin #203, Columbia, read Proposal #9. All wastewater treatment facilities must be fenced sufficiently to restrict entry by children, livestock, and unauthorized persons as well as to protect the facility from vandalism. Fences shall be a minimum of five feet (5') in height and shall be constructed of durable materials appropriate to the site and nature of the treatment facilities. Posts shall be imbedded to a sufficient depth or otherwise securely anchored to prevent displacement and shall not be spaced more than twenty feet (20') apart. Barbed wire, woven wires fabric or chain link mesh shall be securely fastened to the posts with fasteners designed for the type of material used. There will be a minimum five foot (5') clearance from all units. At least one gate shall be provided for access of maintenance equipment and vehicles and each gate shall be provided with a lock. At least one (1) warning sign shall be placed on each side of the facility. Minimum wording shall be "Sewage Treatment Facility – Keep Out". Signs shall be made of durable materials with characters at least two inches (2") high and shall be securely fastened to the fence or posts.

This is currently state law but the Department of Natural Resources will not enforce the law. This has been proposed to have this become a Boone County Law.

Ms. Burley read Proposal #10. An accessible, adequate, safe and drinkable supply of water shall be provided in each mobile home park. If a public supply of water of satisfactory quantity, quality, and pressure is available at the site or at the boundary of the site, connection shall be made thereto and its supply used exclusively. When a satisfactory public water supply is not available, a private water supply system may be developed and used as approved by the State Division of Health.

This has been proposed because of the safety of the residents to the mobile home parks.

Ms. Hepworth read Proposal #11. If water is not included in the lot rent, bills to the residents must be provided. All residents should be able to get receipts for the water bills and/or lot rent they pay by having this mailed to them.

This has been proposed due to changes in whether water bills are included with lot rent or not.

Ms. Hussman read Proposal #12. When burning in Boone County, the first should be at least 50 feet away from any structure. If brush is over 10 feet high, the fire must be 200 yards from any occupied building.

She stated spoke to Mr. Jeff Scott of the Boone County Fire District about this. We just want to assure that the burning takes place far enough away from a structure so that it doesn't pose a danger. You know how quickly brush fires can spread. In Mobile Home Parks, the homes are often close together and if a fire catches one home, it could easily spread door-to-door. The picture shows a large pile of debris and she saw it burned right there. A homeowner called the County fire department because she feared the high flames that threatened to destroy her home. It took the time of our fire department to watch the fire until it died down. They would not have had to be called if the fire had been started further away.

Ms. Curtis read Proposal #13. Liability insurance by the owner is mandatory.

This has been proposed to protect the health and safety of the residents of the mobile home park and the general public.

Ms. Barnes read Proposal #14. A noise ordinance violation issued by the Sheriff's Department does not require the official filing of a complaint by a resident of the Mobile Home Park.

This has been proposed to protect the residents of the mobile home parks.

Pat McKenzie, 5055 S. Providence Road, Lot #105, Columbia, read Proposal #15. Park owners are prohibited from harassing or retaliating against tenants who exercise their rights. A Park owner may not seek to evict tenant(s) solely because they make good faith complaints to a government agency about violations of any health or safety laws, or take good faith actions to protect rights under their leases, or participate in tenants' organizations. Tenants may collect damages from Park Owners who violate this law.

This has been proposed to protect the residents of the mobile home parks.

Ms. McKenzie read Proposal #16. At least yearly there will be a surprise inspection of every Boone County Mobile Home Park to check for obvious violations of public health

codes and nuisance laws. Whenever an inspection is done, the Mobile Home Park owner will receive a written copy of the Public Inspection Report. Additional inspections shall be performed as often as necessary for enforcement.

Ms. Hussman stated tonight, we ask you to implement the responsibility you have been given to protect the health and safety of our Boone County residents. The ordinances you enact will make life much better for the hundreds of people who live in affordable housing in this county, and will make a positive statement about the effectiveness of Boone County government.

Commissioner Stamper clarified that the proposals just read are only draft suggestions not draft ordinances.

Commissioner Stamper opened the floor for a public hearing on this issue.

Lane DePrima, 1840 Boris Drive, Columbia, stated she is a member of the City/County Board of Health. GRO gave a presentation to the Board of Health. After the presentation, the Board of Health decided that there were some valid public health concerns, especially with standing water and drinking water quality. The Board of Health is also concerned with the lagoons but understands this is under DNR regulations.

Ordinances and regulations that apply to all parks make things more clear to all involved at the mobile home parks. The Board of Health would like to be involved with any items regarding health issues.

Glenn Hoffman, 7181 Wagon Trail Road, Wagon Wheels Trailer Court owner, stated on the Proposals that were described earlier in the meeting.

Mr. Hoffman stated if the water is turned off for the park then each home must have their water turned off so no damage is done to the water heaters. No holes have ever been fenced off and none have been left over night without being covered.

There are three main roads in Wagon Wheels Trailer Court and all but one has numbers on the mobile homes. There is one light on each road in the court and some residents have added their own lighting.

There has been work done on the roads and sometimes the gravel was left instead of repaving the road. He believes this is a cheap form of speed bumps.

He asked if the criminal background check would also apply to any contracts that are hired to do work in the park.

Mr. Hoffman stated there are abandoned trailers in his park and some are not sealed. He has not made an effort to remove these trailers. The cost of removal of a mobile home is

expensive. Some abandoned trailers he does own and uses for storage and others he became the owner because he sued someone for rent and possession and the occupant abandoned the trailer. The costs for removing the trailers can be around \$1,000.00.

There are no leases in his park because they work on a month-to-month basis. He discussed his tenure on the Boone County Court Owners and Operators Association, which is no longer in existence.

Mr. Hoffman stated he does not have a problem with posting speed limit signs but does have concern over who will enforce the speed limit. He will not put in speed bumps either.

The trailer park is now on City Water. When the trailer park was on Public Water District water supply, they raised the pressure and busted many water lines in the court.

He does not believe there should be a problem with burning.

He believes many issues that are brought to him should be taken care of between the parties and not brought to him. He doesn't appreciate having people come inspect his property without his knowledge.

He does not support the yearly inspections.

Mr. Hoffman stated he can get more Dumpsters for his property but cannot stop the vandalism. He is supportive of the tire pick up. If someone will help him load an appliance then he will take it to be recycled. Dogs are allowed at the park but for a monthly fee.

The items that have been suggested will cost money and the suggestions for the park owners will inadvertently be passed on to the residents of the parks.

Donna Murray, 115 Crescent Meadows, stated she is a lot owner. There are 251 lots at Crescent Meadows with the majority owned by Wendell Tyree. She has lived there for 16 years and there have been many problems since she has lived there. Currently there is no manager and there has not been one for one year.

There are problems with drugs in the park. There have also been problems with children playing on the lagoons in the winter. There are problems with the roads; there is gravel on the roads. The children throw the gravel which causes more problems. Speed limits are needed in the park. There are also problems with noise and loud music late at night. There is a need for the surprise visits. The children need a safe place to live.

Carl Hoffman, 9803 Route B #28, stated he is the owner of Oak Ridge Mobile Home Park. He is concerned with Proposal #7 (copy of the rules and regulations and lease

requirement). He asked if this would take effect immediately.

Commissioner Stamper stated he believes the Proposal is to have a lease with all rules and regulations for each park.

Commissioner Miller stated the lease could be a month-to-month lease but wants more residents to have the rules and regulations for the park.

Mr. Hoffman stated this would be an additional cost to him for having to work with a lawyer which the cost will be passed on to the tenant and increase the lot rent.

He asked if it would be ok to leave tires in yards for flower beds. Commissioner Stamper stated he does not believe this was specifically addressed in the proposals.

Mr. Hoffman believes the tires are a health hazard to the tenants because of snakes. There are signs posted but should be approved. He does have liability insurance.

He stated mobile home parks are affordable housing for many people.

Brenda Freeman, 7183 N. Wagon Trails Road Lot #20, stated she her landlord gave her and her children a place to live eight years ago because there was a two year waiting list for Section 8 housing. There are problems in this park, not all the problems are with the landlord but there are problems with the tenants. Parents need to take care of their children. She believes the park owners need to be made more responsible.

Bill Arendt, 3100 Brown Station Road, Columbia, owner of Crestvale Trailer Court, stated given adequate time and money all proposals can be implemented.

Proposal #6, the removal of all abandoned automobiles and mobile homes, is very expensive. There is also a legal issue about this, when a titled vehicle is left on someone else's property this causes a problem. He believes the property owner should be given immediate authority to remove the vehicle.

Proposal #8, speed limit signs have been posted on the property but the problems is enforcement of the speed limit. The only enforcement he has is eviction.

Proposal #10, drinking water; samples are sent to the Department of Natural Resources every month. He has had a water operator license for many years.

He believes there are a few unhappy residents but there are more that are happy with living there.

Kevin Ridlehoover, Manager of Crestvale Trailer Court, stated GRO did the research from a lay person's point of view but they are not experienced in trailer court or construction

management. There is a control balance of being able to manage a trailer court and prioritizing what needs to be done at the trailer court. He does not believe this group should be able to control what is or is not a priority in the trailer courts.

Mr. Ridlehoover stated the numbering system is regulated by 911 and houses have to be numbered the have the electricity turned on. Thad Yonke stated Boone Electric cannot give electric unless there is an address to go with the building if it is a Boone Electric service area.

Commissioner Stamper stated just because there is an address does not mean it is posted on the trailer. Mr. Ridlehoover stated it is mandatory that it is posted on the trailer.

Mr. Ridlehoover stated there is night lighting at the trailer park and they are discussing putting in security cameras.

He stated he spoke with Mr. Pendergrass, with the City of Columbia Public Works Department, regarding the disposal of abandoned trailers. The City landfill is charging \$125 or \$150 for a special trailer handling fee, plus a \$300 to \$400 fee to have the trailer pulled to the landfill. He requested the Commission talk with the City about the possibility of dropping the handling fee. The fees are keeping many owners from cleaning up parks.

Regarding the proposal to have owners give copies of the lease, rules and regulations is actually required by State law.

The speed limit is a good proposal but it is difficult to enforce.

In Proposal #7, having six month leases, Mr. Ridlehoover asked if someone stopped paying their rent after two months of a six month lease, would they receive free lease for the remainder of the lease. He thinks this is discrimination to other rental properties that have month-to-month leases and does not believe this should apply to trailer parks.

Commissioner Miller stated it is harder to move a trailer than to move furnishings and this is the logic is behind this proposal.

Mr. Ridlehoover stated they have to give an additional 60 days notice because of owned homes. A rental property does not receive the additional 60 days.

Commissioner Stamper asked Mr. Ridlehoover to clarify the State law for the requirement of giving copies of leases, rules and regulations. Mr. Ridlehoover stated he believes it is part of the renter's rights law.

Mr. Ridlehoover stated the Health Department is already doing inspections.

He noted he has only been the manager for a few months and when GRO did their inspections he had only been the manager for one month. He does not believe GRO should be able to dictate what should or should not be done in each trailer court.

Charles D. Burks, 3501 New Haven Road #300, owner of Woodstock Trailer Court. He noted his son owns Green Hills Trailer Court. He does not have a problem with most of the proposals from GRO because they are already being done. He is concerned with the lease. He rents on a 30 day basis and will always use this. There is not an abandoned car problem.

Commissioner Stamper asked if there were rules and regulations issued to the renters. Mr. Burks stated when someone comes to rent a lot, three pages of rules and regulations are given to the renter to read before the lease is signed.

Mobile home parks are not in Boone County for giving someone a place to live, they are here for the owners to make a profit.

Mr. Burks stated the majority of the comments he has heard this evening are about problems with management but he does not have these problems.

He noted the list GRO created for mobile home parks in Boone County marked Woodstock as having a lagoon. Mr. Burks stated there is no lagoon in his park because they have sewer plants.

Miriam Mahan, 4112 McClay Road, St. Charles, MO, Sts. Joachim and Ann Care Services, stated this is a non-for profit, volunteer organization, that travels from county to county to speak on behalf of the poor. Ms. Mahan spoke of the importance of the need for affordable housing for families and the need for the elected officials to help them provide a safe, sanitary, and secure place to live and raise their children. She hopes the Commission will take into consideration the proposed ordinances presented by GRO.

Randall Blake, 4150 S. Lenoir #1, manager of the Ed's Mobile Home Park, stated there are no perfect trailer parks in Boone County. He and his wife became the managers of Ed's Mobile Home Park last October with major challenges to work on. There are rules and regulations in the park. They have implemented fines if rules and regulations are not followed. There are things that do need to be improved on but it will take time to make the improvements. It would be helpful if there was more support for the mobile home parks from the community for making improvements.

They have put in additional lighting and are in the process of upgrading the water system.

John Payne, 10951 I-70 Drive Northeast, owner of Little City Mobile Home Park, stated he believes there are enough State and County laws that there is enough of a challenge for the County government to enforce the existing laws. He does not believe there should be

any new laws. If any new laws are implemented then they should also be applied to apartments, single family houses, and other properties whether they are rental properties or owner occupied.

Carol Sapp, 3616 Rock Quarry Road, stated she and her husband have owned numerous properties in Boone County and chose to live in a mobile home. When they were looking for a mobile home, they toured many parks in Boone County. Some parks were well maintained. They did see individual homes that were not maintained. She believes some of the issues presented this evening are legitimate but others come down to the accountability of each person living in the park. She does not want to see a six month lease for the park she lives in. There are rules and regulations in her park and they know they have to be followed or evicted.

Solace Simpson, 1734 Overlook Drive, Jefferson City, stated she has spoken with DNR many times on the lagoons and water regulations. DNR has told her that there are a number of laws that are not enforced by the DNR.

There was no one else wishing to speak.

Commissioner Stamper closed the Public Hearing.

Stephanie Browning stated the City/County Health Department has heard comments from GRO and park owners, in both the City and the County. The City/County Health Department has been doing inspections under the nuisance ordinance for Boone County. This ordinance allows the Department to do specific things and look for specific violations. A commitment was made to routinely inspect those areas. In doing these inspections, previous violations are fixed while other violations arise. A lot of man power is being used by the Department to do these inspections. There are issues from a public health perspective that need to be reviewed. Issues need to be addressed by the correct authority. She does not believe all issues can be addressed by the Health Department because they fall out of the scope of the Department. If the Health Department is to take on some of these inspections, it would also require additional staff time.

Gerry Worley stated some of the proposals that have been suggested are beyond the scope of expertise of the Health Department.

Thad Yonke stated the Planning Department has certain areas that may fall under their jurisdiction and not the Health Department. The County may not be able to address some of the issues at all.

Commissioner Miller stated the Commission heard from Ms. Hussman previously and after that discussion, the Commission began working with the Health Department, Planning and Zoning Department. The Planning Department has sent notices regarding abandoned cars because this is part of the Planning Ordinance.

The Commission has worked with DNR and has a meeting set up with the Director of DNR and his staff later this month to discuss this issue and many others the County works with DNR through the Planning and Public Works Department. The Commission is reviewing what can be enforced the existing laws.

She agrees that individuals have responsibility for their own lots. There has to be balance between the tenant and the landlord in order for there to be a solution found to this problem.

Commissioner Elkin stated the Tire Collection will be Saturday, October 12, 2002 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Boone County's North Facility.

Commissioner Elkin stated problems that have been presented this evening are not just with mobile home parks but with other properties, such as apartment complexes, in the County. The Commission should be careful in being fair about enacting new ordinances.

He is concerned with the costs being passed on to the tenants because many people are on fixed incomes.

Commissioner Stamper thanked Ms. Hussman and GRO for bringing forward this issue. He thanked Ms. Mahan and her comments calling for a safe and sanitary environment to raise families in an organized capacity. She encouraged the standards to be raised. The Commission is a public health discussion about minimum and enforceable standards and ultimately a quality of life issue.

He suggested to the Commission to give consideration to referring the 16 proposals to legal counsel for a review on what the County can comply with and cannot. After legal review, Commissioner Stamper suggested having a combined effort between the Health Department and Planning for their review.

Commissioner Stamper thanked all who spoke this evening and those who were present to support this issue.

Commissioner Miller stated there are many good parks in Boone County and should be thankful. She thanked the parks that raised their grade and saw the need for improvement.

There was no further comment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Attest:

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Don Stamper  
Presiding Commissioner

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Wendy S. Noren  
Clerk of the County Commission

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Karen M. Miller  
District I Commissioner

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Skip Elkin  
District II Commissioner