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Sprinkler systems not required

By Janet DelTufo, Assistant Editor

After a lively discussion, the Wickenburg Town Council directed staff to revise a portion of a town code that requires all new homes to install fire sprinkler systems.

The little-known appendix included in the adopted 2006 International Residential Code, requires installation of a fire sprinkler system in all newly constructed homes in order to ensure adequate fire protection.

What was brought before the council earlier this week was a revision of the appendix to say that only new homes not feasibly serviced by the town's water supply and/or more than 1,000 feet from a fire hydrant would be required to install a sprinkler system.

Councilwoman Kristi Henson said that she had received a number of phone calls from individuals expressing concern regarding this appendix.

Also speaking against any sprinkler system requirement was Wickenburg Chamber of Commerce Director Julie Brooks and real estate lobbyist Amanda Wright.

Brooks spoke on behalf of chamber members who expressed their feelings through a member survey.

"This is truly an ordinance we do not need," Brooks said. "I think this entire code needs to be reexamined, because if there is one appendix like this, there will be more."

Councilman Scott Stewart was adamant about removing any kind of requirement for sprinkler systems.

"This is intrusive to your live, and I don't want to add any more government in my life," Stewart said. "This appendix is telling me I am too stupid to take care of myself and that the government knows better than me. The American Society of Plumbing Engineers got this appendix into this code to line their pockets, and that is wrong."

Stewart also told the council that it could easily cost \$5,000 for one of these systems, yet having a fire sprinkler system would only save a homeowner about \$70 a year with their insurance companies.

Vice Mayor John Cook also spoke against requiring any new home to install a sprinkler system, saying that this is not the time to be adding any additional expenses to new home construction.

Mayor Kelly Blunt, a former Wickenburg firefighter, told the council that even though he would install a sprinkler system in his house if he did not have adequate fire protection, he was not in favor of requiring others to do so.

"If am building a house around Wickenburg, I know what a fire will do to a house if you are living rural," Blunt said. "If I'm building a house there, I'm putting in a sprinkler system, but that decision is up to you (individuals) and not up to us (council) to mandate."

Staff will revise the appendix to remove any requirements of fire sprinkler systems. It will go before the council during a future council meeting.

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