

2.01: Outdoor Wood-Burning Boiler Discussion

Community Development Director Hanson reviewed the Staff report in regard to the outdoor wood-burning boilers and their effects on the air quality.

Councilmember Riley asked if the property in question meets the City regulations for these boilers.

Community Development Director Hanson said yes.

Councilmember Specht asked if there is a lot size requirement for these boilers.

Community Development Director Hanson said no. She shared that these boilers have been a concern of the EPA and MPCA and they set strict regulations in 2020 about new furnaces in homes. She noted that these regulations only affected new furnaces and nothing can be done about old ones.

Mayor Heineman shared that he met with the resident who expressed concern with this and when he drove out to his property he noticed the strong smoke smell. He said that while he is not a fan of adding regulations, he would like to find a happy medium so both of these neighbors can be happy.

Councilmember Buscher agreed. She added that she would like them to look into what the cost difference would be between using these boilers and not. She shared that she reviewed the model ordinance from the MPCA as well as other ordinances from other cities and she noticed that a lot of cities require insulation of new outdoor burners. She added that some cities also regulate the chimney heights to ensure the smoke would be extending past the highest peak of the house and is out above the homes in the area. She asked if they had spoken to the homeowner who has the boiler that another resident shared concerns with.

City Administrator Hagen explained that they have not reached out and he does not see why they would since they are not violating any City codes.

Mayor Heineman asked if police and fire noticed any strong smoke smells when they visited the property.

City Administrator Hagen shared Fire Chief Kohner had been out to the property and they looked for signs of construction materials or other materials being burned and he was not able to find any. He said if they are caught burning unauthorized materials, they would have to put it out immediately.

Councilmember Peters shared that when he visited this property the moment he got out of his vehicle he was hit with what smelled like burning chemicals. He said he would like to find a way to put people into compliance.

Councilmember Specht asked if they could do some kind of grant for wood burning stoves.

City Administrator Hagen said they could look into this.

Councilmember Specht said he does not want to pass more regulations; however, this seems to be an issue that he would like to have taken care of.

Community Development Director Hanson noted that they did have a grant program in the past for people updating their wood-burning stoves.

Mayor Heineman shared that Minnesota residents can receive a discount on pellet stoves through the Stove Swap program.

Councilmember Specht said they would not be able to force residents to replace their stoves.

Mayor Heineman suggested they send a mailer to residents outlining this program as an option.

Councilmember Peters added that they can also reiterate what can and cannot be burned in these boilers.

Councilmember Specht asked how they would be able to prove if someone was burning an unauthorized material.

Police Captain Frankfurth shared that if they get a call for a strong smoke smell, they will search around and try to determine which property it is coming from and if they determine that it needs to be investigated then the Fire Department can investigate on the property.

Councilmember Riley stated he likes the idea of sending a reminder to the residents about the current wood-burning boiler ordinance and what materials they are and are not allowed to burn.

Mayor Heineman asked if they could just target this communication to specific areas where it is an issue or if it would have to be City-wide.

Community Development Director Hanson suggested putting this communication in the next *Ramsey Resident*.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood shared that adding a flue section can help disperse the smoke that is produced, and this is a very cheap option.

Councilmember Buscher agreed and reiterated that she would like to see more regulations around new boilers that are installed. She noted that another city has these boilers subject to their nuisance regulations.

Councilmember Peters suggested having this reviewed by the EPB.

Mayor Heineman shared that he would be supportive of having this reviewed by the EPB. He reiterated that he is not in favor of more regulations; however, he would like to show this concerned

resident who brought this forward that Council and Staff are listening to this concern and looking for ways to make it better.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to prepare a communication for residents reminding them of the boiler ordinance and to have this reviewed by the EPB.