



Krista Goodman/Index

Becki Minear, 56, received a summons in August ordering her to comply with a city ordinance that has been in effect since 1992. Minear plans to put a petition together to amend the law or do away with the law entirely.

Local woman appeals RV ordinance

BY JESSICA RAPP
News Editor

For Becki Minear, camping can bring a hefty responsibility.

The 56-year-old Kirksville resident discovered that Kirksville code doesn't allow her to park her recreational vehicle on the driveway in front of her house. She received a letter May 30 and a court summons in August urging her to comply with regulations that have existed since 1992. Minear said she now is forming plans to create a petition against the zoning ordinance.

Minear pled not guilty to charges of parking her RV with noncompliance to the city zoning ordinance in August. The court found her guilty, and scheduled a sentencing for Oct. 16. She said she aims to put a petition together as soon as possible and no later than the next camping season.

"I'd like either to amend [the law] or rescind it to completely do away with it," she said. "I'd like to amend it so that people like me [who have] recreational vehicles can have them parked at our residences during the summer."

She said her initial concern centered on the point that no one enforced the law until now. She has had some

type of camper or boat parked in her driveway since 1986.

Minear's RV sits in her driveway during the summer months when she's not using it to vacation, and it's away from her house at least eight weeks out of the summer. From November to March, she parks the RV in a storage area south of town and she and another RV owner exchange spots at the turn of the season, she said.

She said she doesn't have anywhere else to put her vehicle because the area on the side of her house isn't wide enough and an awning over one of the side windows prevents the tall vehicle from sitting there. Minear said she would prefer to store it on her property.

"I don't want to park it away from the house because, as I told City Council, I tried that twice at the fairgrounds," she said. "Both years they were vandalized."

Vandals once entered Minear's RV through the front door with a crow bar and then again through one of the windows, but police didn't pursue the issue, she said.

A camper also requires maintenance that makes it inconvenient to store elsewhere before a trip, she said. The ordinance allows an RV to sit on a driveway for 24 hours, but she said

it takes longer than that to prepare it for a trip.

"I've had an electrical box put out there so you can keep it plugged in, and that way you don't have to completely defrost it, completely empty it," Minear said. "I've also got a small freezer out there, so in the spring, I fill the freezer up to last us three to four camping sessions, and as I run out I just replenish. ... And it's hard on them to constantly empty them out, turn them off, turn them back on. ... It takes 24 hours after you plug it in for the refrigerator with the freezer on top to get cold enough so you can start putting things in it."

Code enforcement officer Stan East said city regulations don't permit RVs to sit in front of houses for the same reason single-family residences must have a 25-foot front yard with houses built to an invisible property line, East said.

"If people wanted to look out their windows and see down the street, they can," he said.

East said he told Minear he would deal with any other complaints about RVs in the same manner he dealt with her situation.

"[Minear] said 'I can give you a list,' and I said 'If you give me a list, I can address them all,'" East said. "...

She asked for my fax number."

Shortly after sending Minear a letter June 2, East received a fax containing 16 complaints about RVs in front of houses from Kirksville's Social Security Administration office, where Minear works. He received faxes with 15 complaints from the same company in the second week, starting June 9, and seven complaints July 17. He said most of the people complied and moved their RVs, but others went or are in the process of going to court.

East said Minear could face a fine of up to \$500 for not moving her vehicle before her sentencing date. Minear said she plans to store it down the street on property she and her brother own. This spot cannot remain permanent because the house is for sale, she said.

City Manager Mari Macomber said that until now, the city only enforced the ordinance if it received a complaint, and complaints have been received before. She said they instead focused on unlicensed vehicles and basic upkeep, such as lawn mowing and trash.

"That's how the department addresses the issue," she said. "They're not going to do that anymore. If they see an RV, they're going to talk to the residents."

Train derails in Macon

Thursday morning train wreck results in no injuries

BY MARGARET HOOPER
Staff Reporter

A locomotive and several cars derailed at 7:05 a.m. last Thursday in Macon County.

Macon County Sheriff's Department Chief Deputy Jeff Vogan confirmed that the cars, which belonged to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, went off the track between Callao and New Cambria.

"The engine and 31 train cars loaded with coal were laying on their sides," Vogan said.

Vogan confirmed that there were no injuries reported and no hazardous materials onboard.

Steve Forsberg, general director of public affairs for BNSF Railway, said a clean-up crew was dispatched to assess the damage and clear the track, which was reopened at 2 a.m. the following morning.

Cars that were only slightly damaged could be put back on the track, Forsberg said, but coal that had spilled and cars that were severely damaged was disposed of.

"It's no different than in an automobile accident," Forsberg said. "It depends on how much damage there was."

The train, which had a total of 149 cars, was traveling from Wyoming to an electric utilities company in the Midwest when the accident occurred. Forsberg said the cause of the derailment still is unknown, but the investigation is focusing on one of the couplers, which connect the cars together. The company has 30 days to investigate the cause of the accident and file a report.

The frequency with which derailments occur has declined by 70 percent since the 1980s, and they occur much less frequently than automobile accidents, Forsberg said.

He said trains scheduled to travel the track where the derailment occurred experienced an approximate delay of 12 hours or more but that the track was not a heavily traveled one.

An Amtrak representative confirmed that Amtrak does not use the track where the derailment occurred and therefore experienced no delays because of the accident.

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