

Planning Assistant

From: Planning Assistant <planning@townoflaconner.org>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2024 11:25 AM
To: Planning Assistant
Subject: FW: Short Term Rentals/First Street

From: L Clark <[REDACTED]@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 26, 2024 9:29 AM
To: administrator@townoflaconner.org
Cc: council_3@townoflaconner.org; council_4@townoflaconner.org; council_1@townoflaconner.org; council_2@townoflaconner.org; council_3@townoflaconner.org; planner@townoflaconner.org; Editor <editor@laconnernews.com>
Subject: Short Term Rentals/First Street

Dear Town Council Members:

A friend asked me to send you something concerning the recent short term rental notices that have been posted around town. This friend has no desire to have their name listed in a town record and so they asked me to submit something, which I of course am happy to do.

This is their comment:

I often watch videos of seaside towns in other places in the U.S. and the U.K. I have noticed in the comments that locals object to short-term rentals because the locations that have approved the transition of buildings from "residential" to "short-term rental" find themselves with smaller populations during "off-season" months and as an effect of this the local businesses often suffer significantly more during the slow periods. This is making it more likely that "chain" stores are taking over the traditional "mom and pop" stores, thereby lessening the charm of the seaside towns. Plus, it makes it significantly more expensive for the "regular" family to visit these areas.

Secondly, I am confident that the Town of La Conner can afford larger pieces of yellow paper for posting their notices so that people can actually see them to know something is being proposed for comment.

I did mention to my friend that the Town of La Conner is going to do whatever it wants and an email like this will likely have zero effect. Nevertheless, I agreed to send it.

If you need a name for this comment, you are welcome to use mine.

First Street

While I have your attention, I will comment concerning the transition of First Street to a one way street. I apologize for the bit of sarcasm that may be interwoven throughout, but it's going to be a part of the comment. And, I believe, rightfully so.

First, instead of doing an all or nothing, why not use some creativity. Why not try alternating the direction of the street traffic, e.g. MWF - go North Bound. STTHS - go South Bound. There are MANY cities in the U.S. and around the world that use this thought process with parking, e.g. no parking on M, W, F on one side of the street, etc. Seattle uses this methodology for their Express lanes for a.m. and p.m. driving. Certainly, people living in and visiting La Conner are smart enough to follow signs for something like this for a small street like First Street. Well, at least they should be. In a post-COVID world, who knows. Perhaps if the speed limit in La Conner were enforced it would even be more likely that people would be paying attention to what is going on.

Second, why not look at making First Street "car-free"? Would it really be such a bad thing that people came to La Conner and had to walk a little bit. You seem to believe there is enough parking in town to allow for the Centre Street project and the FireHall restaurant so this shouldn't be such an issue. Plus, that would make for a VERY fun street where people would perhaps interact with each other.

Third, it has been stated by others, and I would tend to agree with them, that a majority of the people who park on First Street are not visitors, but employees or owners of the businesses in that area. Get creative in trying to remedy this issue. Perhaps, you could contract with the Port to utilize some of their parking. They have huge parking lots which rarely fill up even during high peak days. Hmmm!?! There may be some instances where this might be an issue, e.g. Fourth of July and the boat and car show, but those are rare.

Note: Why people come to La Conner to enjoy its fresh air and relaxed life-style so they can drive here in their car and park in front of the building where they work is beyond me, but that's what happens when people are merely just trying to "survive." Perhaps you can help them out a bit by putting them in a position where they have to walk a bit before they get to work. They will likely be happier and provide better customer service to the visitors of La Conner if they've had a chance to clear their head and wake up a little from wherever it is they drove from since they likely cannot afford to live in La Conner now that it has become even more expensive for the average retail employee. This will likely make the whole "La Conner" experience more enjoyable wouldn't it? And you want people coming back to La Conner...well perhaps not.

Third, instead of just "making it happen" all at once. Why not do some experiments during the week when traffic is low during the summer to see how a one-way street will affect businesses and residential areas. New restaurants often do "soft" openings to work out the kinks before opening up for business. Why not give it a try instead of putting a plan in place and crossing your fingers hoping it works and making it so much more difficult to change.

In one of the earlier comments in the "newspaper", someone mentioned that they lost their job because the business where they worked failed due to one-way traffic during tulip season years ago. I don't know the truth of this comment, but why not be proactive in trying to prevent such a thing with some "out-of-the-box" thinking.

[I do get a little "chuckle" by saying this because I realize you are just going to do what the Messrs. Thomas and DaVolio recommend, but I can't help but suggest it. Perhaps you will give it a try.]

Third Street

[more sarcasm here] Love the new building on Third Street. You know, the modern one on the same lot as the historical yellow house catty cornered from the newspaper building.

Best regards,

Linda Clark