

Group to work with city on contractor licensing

By MAGGIE O'BRIEN
WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER

Landlords and small-business owners will work with the City of Omaha in hopes of making changes to a proposal that could create licensing requirements for general contractors.

Representatives of the group could meet with city planners as soon as Friday, said John Chate-lain, an attorney who owns rental properties in Omaha.

He's agreed to represent business owners at the meetings.

"The city is trying to micro-manage everybody," he said. "It's impossible to do that."

The Omaha City Council had been scheduled to vote on the ordinance Tuesday. Council members agreed to postpone a vote for four weeks so opponents could work with the city to come up with a version that would satisfy them. The vote is now scheduled for June 21.

Last week, more than a dozen people, mostly landlords, lined up at the council meeting to oppose the proposal, which would create licensing requirements for contractors who do work within the city or its three-mile zoning jurisdiction. The landlords were upset that they could be required

to get licenses to perform work at their rental properties.

City Planning Director Rick Cunningham has said the proposal would likely not affect landlords, since most maintenance and repair tasks would not require the type of city permits needed for large projects.

The landlords were joined by several owners of small contracting companies who said they couldn't afford to pay the fees necessary to obtain the license, as well as the additional bond and insurance requirements mandated by the ordinance.

The ordinance, proposed by the Planning Department, aims to put Omaha in line with other cities that require licenses for construction trades, city officials have said. If approved, Cunningham said, the measure would help ensure compliance with city codes and improve safety for residents.

As written, the ordinance would require general contractors to pay a \$300 application fee for the three-year license.

Applicants also would be required to pass an exam, have at least a \$1 million insurance policy and hold a \$10,000 bond.

Contact the writer:
402-444-3100, maggie.obrien@owh.com