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## Proposed rental ordinance creating a stir in Valparaiso

(<http://www.post-trib.com/news/porter/2036404,rental-ord-0209.article>)

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VALPARAISO -- A committee tackling the city's proposed rental registration ordinance will get its first chance to hear concerns Wednesday.

The Rental Registration Committee will meet at 3:30 p.m. Wednesday at City Hall, according to a news release.

City officials created the committee after receiving complaints and concerns from landlords and tenants about the proposed ordinance, which would require every owner of apartments in the city to register their rental units and pay an annual fee of \$25 per apartment unit that would go toward funding annual inspections.

Those inspections would check to see if landlords were following a set of living codes that the proposed ordinance would also create. Although a number of people who spoke out against the ordinance at a recent City Council meeting named several concerns, most people took issue with the city coming into their properties and said the living codes went too far.

Bill Oeding, city administrator, said that the committee would be made up of 17 people, including landlords, city employees and Valparaiso City Council members, all of whom have been selected. It also includes three seats for tenants that have yet to be filled, he said. Bruce Berner, president of the Valparaiso Plan Commission and member of other task force groups, will head the group.

Berner, a law professor at Valparaiso University, said he wanted to determine during the first meeting where everyone stands.

"A part of this is to find out on day one how far apart people really are on this," Berner, who has not been involved in this issue until now, said. "When we did day one of the smoking ordinance task force, they were so far apart I didn't know that we had any chance.

"We'll see whether we can get there this time."

Berner said he plans on having all the committee's meetings open to public comment.

Oeding said officials weren't surprised by the people speaking out against the proposed ordinance at the last city council meeting and consider it part of the process. The city doesn't plan on completely backing off of the most divisive issues, though, he said. The city will continue to insist on some kind of a registration and inspection program, Oeding said.

"We think these are critical," he said, adding that they've heard many complaints from tenants and have had problems finding out who owns certain apartments.

No changes of the ordinance have been made since the version presented at the last city council meeting, Oeding said, because it didn't make sense when the committee is likely to come up with its own changes.

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