

Vacant house ordinance

Amber Ash isn't trying to reinvent the wheel with her introduction of "AN ORDINANCE CREATING CHAPTER 8.68, VACANT AND ABANDONED RESIDENTIAL STRUCTURES, OF TITLE 8, HEALTH AND SAFETY, OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF CHEYENNE, WYOMING" but it certainly calls into question where the City governing body has been for the past 24 years - the years the Hynds Building has sat empty and abandoned on one of the city's major intersections.

It makes you wonder why the youngest and newest member of the City governing body was the first to notice empty, abandoned and even boarded-up buildings in Cheyenne.

It is understandable why she started with residences instead of commercial buildings. When it comes time to treat commercial buildings in the same fashion this ordinance will deal with forsaken residences, all real estate agents and slum property owners will be in front of the governing body explaining why a building sitting empty 24 years as the Hynds Building has is good for the City. It will be described as "an opportunity" as the former mayor and former city council viewed the closing of one after another of Cheyenne's downtown landmarks.

Kudos to Amber for getting the ball rolling. Cheyenne could have, at any point since going to a "strong mayor" form of government, borrowed from the numerous cities and towns that have similar ordinances on the books. Amber's words are not original. She, like any good elected official, simply borrows from what has been done and that which has stood legal challenges in other jurisdictions.

As I walked around the block west of the recently closed Safeway on Pioneer Avenue, before I had read the proposed Ordinance, it was obvious to me how the

mayor and city had slept again, had tolerated continuing destruction to the quality of our city and ignored neighbor's concerns about that property. With one of the nation's largest corporations in ownership of those boarded up houses for seven years, there was never an attempt to require demolition or removal of the houses and out buildings Safeway had bought and abandoned. Worse, there was no demand of Safeway to replace surrounding sidewalks which are now in a deteriorated and dangerous condition.

While there are sure to be some who believe an action such as Amber Ash is proposing is encroachment on private property rights, property owners have no right to allow their holdings to diminish the property value of their neighbors. It is unfortunate some have to be required to do what they should have done without a hammer over their head. They won't and an ordinance such as this one is necessary.

The ordinance, to apply to a specific property, requires that a house be "abandoned" for at least 180 consecutive days and meet at least of several conditions, including: Open to casual entry or trespass; Is fire damaged so as to be uninhabitable; Demonstrates a lack of maintenance and upkeep; has been secured or boarded up for at least 90 days; Has one or more utilities disconnected or not in use; Is structurally unsound; Is a potential hazard or danger to persons, etc. Any of ten defects is a violation and subjects the property to the provisions of this ordinance.

Basically, the requirement is registration and fees.

It is unfortunate that such action was not taken against Safeway with the houses they purchased, emptied and abandoned. And, unfortunately, it does not apply to the Hynds Building. Someday.

Flu shots

Cheyenne-Laramie County Health Department continues to provide additional vaccines - on Tuesday March 2, during the blood draw. The blood draw on this day will run from 7:00 to 10:00 am at CLCHD at 100 Central Avenue.

H1N1 Vaccine is free and available for all ages, 6 months and over. The Seasonal Flu Vaccine is \$20.00 and can be billed to Medicaid, Medicare and Great-West Health Insurance.

To expedite wait times, flu consent forms can be accessed at the CLCHD website. For additional information regarding flu clinics, schedules, etc., please call 633-4098.





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Electronic billboards

Denver, Colorado, population in excess of 500,000 has three (3) LED billboards. And the City Council's Blueprint Denver committee want no more.

Cheyenne, Wyoming population less than 60,000, has four (4) LED billboards. And the governing body would be happy to put one at every intersection the outdoor advertising company would like to place them.

Why do you think Denver is not supportive of billboards in general and Cheyenne can't get enough of them - can't get enough of them to the point of illegally permitting them to be placed even after they had been banned? Why? Because Cheyenne is usually a few decades

behind the rest of the nation. The Cheyenne governing body is soliciting drive-in movie theaters, repositioning all the phone booths they can find, and seeking leisure suits for councilmen to wear.

Denver has adopted a maximum square footage for billboards. Erect as many as you'd like - you just can't add to the square footage. Cheyenne allows ground level billboards (they call them bus benches), all the billboards a bankrupt company can build, and electronic (LED) billboards at the most dangerous intersections.

In Denver, billboards can appear in only three zones. On East Colfax, new billboards are prohibited. Here, anything goes. The more, the merrier.

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