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Prairie Dog ordinance passes introductory phase

August 1, 2013

By **Kevim Wilson**

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While the intensity of its feelings may be in dispute, the Clovis City Commission is no fan of prairie dogs. Thursday night, it also wasn't a big fan of adding another ordinance to the city code.

With reservations, commissioners approved introducing an ordinance that would name prairie dogs as a public nuisance.

The ordinance will likely be up for a final vote during the Sept. 5 meeting, but commissioners were already indicating a preference towards amendments to accurately reflect the rodent's public health and safety risks and to focus the ordinance on prairie dogs.

"Sometimes we make things too broad, and it can be interpreted in ways those commissioners didn't want," Commissioner Bobby Sandoval said. "We need to be as specific as we can."

The introduction passed on a 7-1 vote. Commissioner Fidel Madrid cast the lone dissenting vote, noting the ordinance was heavily pushed by county residents who balk when similar ordinances are discussed at the county level.

The ordinance was introduced as a request to Mayor David Lansford from Curry County resident Blake Prather, who spoke at the commission's July 18 meeting against a request to aid Citizens for Prairie Dogs in an effort to relocate the animals from O.G. Potter Park and the Goodwin Lake Walking Trails to Bureau of Land Management land in Chaves County.

Even though BLM's land priorities would supersede any Chaves County ordinance banning the importation of prairie dogs, commissioners felt it wouldn't be neighborly to help a third party bring prairie dogs to a county that clearly stated the animals weren't wanted.

Susan Hubby of Clovis and Citizens for Prairie Dogs warned the ordinance would open a Pandora's box by forcing private citizens to get rid of prairie dogs and use dangerous chemicals they're not trained to handle. But she said she felt the commission already made its mind up, and it was a black eye for the city.

"I take this as a personal and vicious attack on me and the prairie dogs," Hubby said. "The hatred of this mayor and commissioners and how they're dealing with it is evident, and I take it personally."

Commissioner Sandra Taylor-Sawyer said she had taken her share of hatred as a city commissioner since the July 18 meeting, noting she's received obscene and threatening emails from prairie dog supporters. Taylor-Sawyer said she didn't hate prairie dogs, but said the animals were out of hand when they ended up drowned in a city-maintained pool at Potter Park.

"My grandbabies swim in that pool," Taylor-Sawyer said. "I don't want them coming in there. The

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 Fair
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 Wind: SSE 12 mph
 Humidity: 54%

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prairie dogs have got to go.”

Taylor-Sawyer said Hubby should find a place that would take the prairie dogs over the next month, and she'd be totally for their safe relocation.

Commissioner Dan Stoddard said even if the ordinance was passed, it wasn't a death sentence for the animals.

“All they have to do is call you, you pick them up and take them to a safe place,” Stoddard said.

Travis Nuckols, a resident of Clovis since 1956, said Clovis was cattle country when he arrived, but it's now prairie dog country, and city inaction made it happen.

“If you ever get out and drive around town, you'll see they're everywhere,” Nuckols said. “You get up here and talk and talk and talk. You never come up with a decision.”

Nuckols blamed the inaction on governmental bodies being too afraid to deal with threats of what will happen from animal activists.

“They don't grow cattle, they don't farm,” Nuckols said. “They don't grow anything. All they produce is what comes out of their mouth to shove it up somebody else.”

Don Reid, who lives by the Goodwin Lake Walking Trails, said an ordinance wasn't needed as long as the city took care of its own property.

“Why don't we make the birds a nuisance? You park your car under a tree and they'll mess it up,” Reid said. “Let's not put more government on this thing. If the city will take care of Goodwin Lake, I will take care of what's on my property.”

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Weekly Web Poll

The Curry County Fair starts Tuesday. What is your favorite part about the fair?

- The food.
- The rides.
- The animal shows.
- The music.
- I don't go to the fair.

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Steve Winters · Top Commenter · Works at City of Clovis, NM (City Government)

I'm not a prairie dog fan at all but I'm less of a fan of local government imposing ordinances that infringe upon my rights as a property owner. I won't vote for or support any commissioner who votes yes on this.
****cheers****

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Kent McManigal · [Follow](#) · Top Commenter

Any prairie dog ordinance should be a two-parter: It should also name city commissioners a "public nuisance" if passed.

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Kayla Wilfong

(I can't see the comments on this article for whatever reason, so I'll put in my two cents here)

Chattanooga State Technical Community College students were outraged and saddened by the removal of our Canadian Geese. They flocked to our campus because of its beautiful, man-made ponds. They were always there, and they would occasionally cross the streets on campus in huge groups, blocking the way. But it was endearing. They were more of a mascot than the one that was chosen for the school a long time ago. Come to find out, the team that did the removing actually killed all of them... I'm from Chattanooga, and I don't know anything about this city, but it sounds like a lot of the citizens really like the prairie dogs, and see them as an integral part of their hometown's identity. The ambiance of a place's environment is something that gives your memories the added nostalgia. When these things are missing, you mourn how things are now. Maybe it's a pest animal. But I'm sure it's something the people would miss. The commissioner doesn't want them swimming in the pool with her grandkids? It's clearly impossible to build something that would keep them out of there. They must remove them for her ~feelings~ about her grandkids' life experiences at the pool. Obviously the town revolves around her.

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Douglas McGregor · Top Commenter · ENMU Clovis Campus

Right on Travis Nuckols.

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Bill Lockwood Jr. · Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University - Worldwide

Can we add the pedophiles, murderers, rapists, thieves, and gang-bangers to the list of public nuisances? Then we can poison them too!

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Stephenie Kube Brooks · Top Commenter

Totally agree Travis Nuckols!

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