

CASA GRANDE Dispatch

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DAYBREAK | RECREATIONAL VEHICLES IN PINAL COUNTY

Group calls for relaxed restrictions

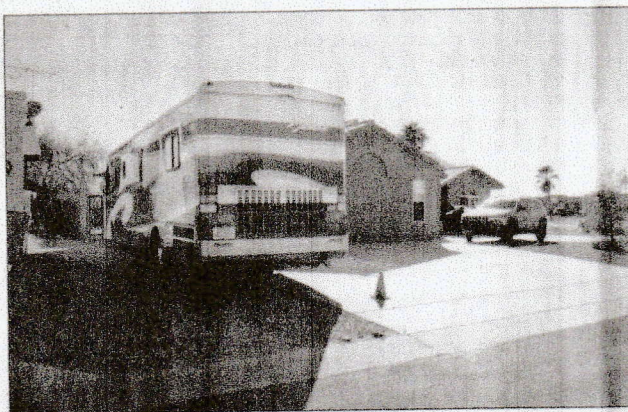
Parking outside houses creates illegal dwelling

By TANNER CLINCH
Staff Writer

ARIZONA CITY — A self-declared “citizens committee” of RVers is going before the Pinal County Board of Supervisors this month to try to change a more than half-century-old recreational vehicle ordinance that is causing many county residents to have illegal dwellings on their property.

According to the ordinance, it is a violation of zoning to have an occupied motor home outside the primary residence in a residential area.

For Arizona City residents such as Rich Wist, who has been working with the county to try to change the ordinance for several years, this



Tanner Clinch/Eloy Enterprise

An RV is parked outside an Arizona City home off Sunland Gin Road. Pinal County ordinances make it illegal for RVs to be occupied outside the primary residence in residential areas.

means that none of his friends who have RVs can park their vehicles and stay on his property without it

being a zoning violation.

“If the real estate agent would have told me, ‘you cannot have

RV visitors come and stay at your place,’ I wouldn’t have bought a house here,” said Wist, an avid RVer who has a number of friends with RVs visit him throughout the year.

Some members of the citizens committee have been trying to change the ordinance since 2013, when concerned residents started working with Pinal County Planning and Development to modify the ordinance so that it is agreeable to all parties.

Through these dealings with the county, the planning department came up with a revised ordinance that was shared with Arizona City residents in 2014. The proposed ordinance was not satisfactory to many in the audience at that meeting, specifically a section that put in place minimum setback distances for parked RVs. According to Ron Parsons, who sits at the helm of the organized group of citizens, the minimum setback distance would

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RV rules

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make it impossible to have an occupied RV on almost every CR-3 (single-family residence) lot in Pinal County. Almost every plot of land in Arizona City is a CR-3 lot.

After the planning department failed to come up with a satisfactory revision, Supervisor Anthony Smith suggested that the citizens make a draft of a new ordinance that would be considered by the planning department.

The citizens came up with a draft that seemed satisfactory to many of the parties involved, but a representative from Pinal County Environmental Health brought to their attention a state

health statute involving RVs during a public supervisors meeting on Jan. 28, 2015.

According to Arizona Administrative Code Article 5, which outlines health codes for the state, a “trailer coach park” is defined as “any plot of ground upon which two or more trailer coaches, occupied for dwelling or sleeping purposes, are located.”

That code brought attention to many other parts of Pinal County where multiple RVs are parked on the same property, such as Thunderbird Farms near Maricopa, where people own 3.3-acre lots and have several RVs parked on them when they have winter visitors.

Karen Quibell, a Canadian who owns one such property in Thunderbird Farms, has three RV

sites on her property as well as a roping arena. The state statute means her property is considered an “RV park” and would need to be licensed as such.

“We know the bylaws are outdated and the (citizens) committee also knows this, and that is why they are trying to revise them and bring them up to date,” Quibell said.

The reasoning behind the statute is to make sure that places that have large numbers of RVs are sanitary due to the fact that many RVs have bathrooms. However, Parsons and Wist contend that the ordinance was drafted when so-called self-contained RVs were not the norm. Self-contained RVs can store their sewage for days at a time, at which time it can be dumped at a proper disposal location.

“It appears that the proposals are restrictive based on what could be instead of actual facts,” Parsons said in an open letter to the Planning and Zoning Commission. “It would be like a state trooper stopping and issuing a citation because your car is capable of speeding even though you are under the speed limit.”

Now the citizens committee is in its final push to try to change the laws that they find to be “unfriendly to RVers” by bringing their proposal before the Board of Supervisors on Feb. 17.

“No one that I’m aware of is trying to have an RV park or gain wealth by hosting RV friends,” Parsons said. “If someone is running a pay RV park, then we already have laws in place to handle that situation. I would be the first to report them.”