

Council to address blighted property, nuisance law

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The St. Landry Parish Council will meet at 6 p.m. Wednesday to debate a new ordinance designed to give the parish more power to clean up blighted property.

"We have an ordinance in place but it doesn't have much bite," said Parish President Don Menard. "We need something with teeth in it."

The nuisance ordinance would make it illegal for residents in a residential area to allow their grass to grow to a height of more than 12 inches or to allow their lot to "become a haven for rodents, other dangerous animals or reptiles."

For properties outside of subdivisions or neighborhoods, the grass can't be higher than 24 inches.

The ordinance would not apply to agricultural land, forests or woodlands but still calls for a mowed 50-foot buffer adjacent to occupied subdivisions or neighborhoods.

Violators will be given 10 days to correct the problem for a first offense and five days for all subsequent offenses. If the problem is not corrected, the ordinance gives the parish the power to clean up the property and bill the owner for the work.

The ordinance also declares junked or abandoned vehicles to be public nuisance and allows the parish to haul them away. Owners can reclaim their vehicles by paying the cost of its pick up.

The proposed law requires the parish to first give the vehicles owner a 15 day notice. If the owner doesn't act, he is liable for a \$100 fine as well as the cost of hauling away the car.

Also covered by the nuisance ordinance are dilapidated and dangerous buildings. After being notified that their building is considered dilapidated, the owner will be given a hearing before the parish council.

Should the council find against the owner, parish crews can demolition the building after a further 10-day delay unless the owner appeals the council's decision.

If the parish demolishes the building, the cost of the demolition will be billed to the owner.

In other action, the council is expected to call for two property tax renewal elections for Oct. 4, both to benefit the Coulee Croche Fire Protection District 4.

One is a renewal of a 10-year, one-mil tax and the second is for a 10-year, two-mil tax. If both are approved by the voters, they should generate about \$20,000 a year in revenue.