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Taxes, dangerous buildings and comprehensive plan dominate Study Session.

The Branson Board of Aldermen heard proposals that would affect the city's collection of tourism taxes, the city's growth and demolishing dangerous buildings during its regular Study Session on Thursday.

Changes to the Licensing and Tourism Taxation Ordinances would clarify who is to be licensed and strengthen the ability to collect the city's tourism taxes on ticketed attractions, hotels and restaurants. The proposed changes include:

- ✓ Requiring all entertainment groups to have a business license. Currently, many shows perform in one theater, but only the theater has a business license.
- ✓ Requiring new tourism tax-paying businesses and those businesses that have had their city licenses revoked to post a bond with the city equal to three times their monthly tax liability. This would ensure that the city would collect its tourism taxes should the businesses close.
- ✓ Requiring the seller of a business to file his or her final tourism tax return within 14 days of selling or closing the business. Also requiring the buyer of a business to withhold owed tourism taxes from the sale price at closing and remit taxes to the city on behalf of the seller.
- ✓ Establishing the due date for all monthly tourism tax returns to be the 20th of the following month in which they are collected from customers. Currently, four months a year, January April, July, and October, following each quarter, tourism taxes are due the last day of the month.

Aldermen also heard the progress on creating a Comprehensive Development Plan for the city of Branson. This plan looks into the future of Branson 10 to 15 years and determines land use, transportation needs, commercial and residential zoning, sewer and water extensions and economic development. It also takes into account the values of the community like protecting the environment, family-oriented recreation and entertainment, and types of development.

While Comprehensive Development Plans involve a great amount of citizen input and ideas, Branson will be hiring an outside consultant to oversee in the plan's creation. City Planning and

Development Director Jim Lawson told the Board that 17 firms from across the country have submitted proposals, and his staff will be reviewing them and narrowing the field to four or five who will then come to Branson for interviews.

Branson Mayor Raeanne Presley will also appoint a Steering Committee made up of Planning and Zoning Commissioners and area citizens to be part of the process and then implement the plan when completed. Lawson said it will take about a year to finish the plan.

Lawson is also proposing changes to the city code relating to the removal of dangerous and dilapidated buildings in Branson. If a building is determined to be a public nuisance and dangerous, the city can order the owner to repair or demolish. If owner refuses, the city will then raze the structure and bill the owner for costs. If owner doesn't pay, collection would be by litigation to circuit court and the city could ask to sell the property under a writ of execution.

The Planning and Development Department budgeted \$200,000 in 2010 for nuisance abatement.

"This will strengthen the city's position in dealing with blighted areas," said Lawson. "We'll have the enforcement power to remove old, rundown buildings that have been standing in the city for years and improve a lot of neighborhoods."

All three of the proposals, tourism tax collection, new comprehensive plan and dangerous buildings are expected to come before Aldermen for final approval later this year.