

ORDINANCE NO. 13-5604

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF BILLINGS, PROVIDING THAT THE BILLINGS, MONTANA MUNICIPAL CODE BE AMENDED BY REVISING ARTICLE 18-300, AND AMENDING SECTIONS 18-302, 18-303, 18-306, 18-307, AND 18-308.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BILLINGS, MONTANA:

Section 1. That the Billings, Montana, City Code be amended by amending certain sections of Article 18-300 relating to public nuisances, as follows:

Sec. 18-301. - Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to control conditions in the city that constitute public nuisances, are injurious to public health, safety and welfare, obstruct the free use of property or interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property and to provide for the abatement of such nuisances, to protect the public health, safety and welfare and to promote the economic development of the city. It is also the purpose of this article to prevent and prohibit those conditions which reduce the value of private property, interfere with the enjoyment of public and private property, create and constitute public nuisances and contribute to the degradation of the character of neighborhoods and the depreciation of property values.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 1, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-302. - Definitions.

For the purposes of this article the following definitions shall apply:

Abate means to repair, replace, remove, destroy or otherwise remedy the condition in question by such means, in such a manner and to such an extent that is determined necessary in the interest of the health, safety and general welfare of the effected community.

Attractive hazard means the open storage on property of any container that may attract children and having a compartment of more than one and one-half (1½) cubic feet capacity and a door or lid that locks or fastens automatically when closed and cannot be easily opened from the inside.

Dangerous structure means any dangerous, decaying, unkempt, falling or damaged residential dwelling or other structure suitable for human occupancy excluding any structure related to an agricultural or farming operation.

Enforcement officer means ~~any city employee~~ code enforcement officer, police officer, or other city employee designated by the city council or the city administrator.

Junk includes the open storage of old appliances, equipment, or parts thereof, old iron or other scrap metal, automobile or truck tires, cardboard, old lumber or scrap wood, rags, rope, paper, debris, rubble, batteries, rubber debris, mattresses or any worn out, cast off or discarded article or material which is ready for destruction or has been collected or stored as salvage, for conversion to some other use or for reduction into components and is not part of a commercial or public salvaging or recycling operation.

Junk vehicle means any discarded, ruined, wrecked, or dismantled motor vehicle or motor vehicle parts or components. Any vehicle not capable of immediate and legal operation on public roads shall be considered a junk vehicle for purposes of this section., ~~including any component parts and which is not lawfully and validly licensed. For purposes of this article, any vehicle that is operable but unlicensed is considered a junk vehicle.~~

~~*Nuisance* means a public nuisance created by allowing rubble, debris, junk, junk vehicle(s), dangerous structure(s) or refuse to accumulate so that it:~~

- ~~(1) Endangers safety or health, is offensive to the senses, or obstructs the free use of property so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property, or~~
- ~~(2) A condition which renders any public right of way dangerous for passage.~~

Nuisance means a situation created or allowed to continue by the owner or occupant of real property which endangers public safety or health, is offensive to the senses, renders any public right of way dangerous for passage, adversely affects the property values of adjacent properties, or obstructs the free use of property so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property. A Nuisance may include, but is not limited to:

- (1) Allowing rubble, debris, salvage, junk, junk vehicle(s) or refuse to accumulate.
- (2) Allowing a structure to remain unsecured from unauthorized entry.
- (3) Allowing a structure to become an eyesore or blight on a neighborhood by neglect or failure to make necessary repairs.
- (4) Allowing a residential structure to become unsuitable for human habitation, by failure to maintain the structure in compliance with applicable building, technical, and model codes.
- (5) Allowing a condition to continue which materially and adversely affects property values on multiple adjacent and nearby properties.

Obstruction to the public right-of-way means the placement of any debris, refuse, rubble, dirt, gravel, soil, fence, junk, junk vehicle or other personal property so as to obstruct traffic, drainage, pedestrians or otherwise safe and open access to such right-of-way.

Open storage means exposed to the elements or not stored inside an enclosed structure which includes walls on all sides and a roof.

Person means any individual, firm, association, partnership, corporation or any entity, public or private.

Premises means any lot, parcel of land, building, parcel, real estate, land or portion of land whether improved or unimproved including any portion of any street, right-of-way or alley lying between such lot or parcel of land and the center of such street, right-of-way or alley.

Responsible person means any agent, lessee, owner or other person occupying or having charge or control of any premises.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 2, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-303. - Prohibitions.

It is unlawful for any person to create or maintain on any premises or adjacent to a public right-of-way within the incorporated area of the city any condition that contributes to the creation of a public nuisance and is injurious to health or safety, is offensive to the senses, or obstructs the free use of property, so as to interfere with the comfortable enjoyment of life or property, or obstructs a public right-of-way. Such condition shall be deemed a nuisance if it affects an entire community or neighborhood or any considerable number of persons. Public nuisances include but are not limited to the following:

- (1) Maintaining an attractive hazard on any premises for more than twenty-four (24) hours without removing the door, lid, or locking or fastening device from such container;
- (2) Maintaining a junk vehicle or vehicles on any premises for more than five (5) consecutive days without removing such vehicle(s) to a legal disposal site or placing said junk vehicle(s) inside a storage building or garage;
- (3) Maintaining a collection of junk (see definition) on any premises for more than five (5) consecutive days without removing such material to a legal disposal site or placing such collection inside a storage building or garage;
- (4) Creating or maintaining an obstruction to a public right-of-way;
- (5) Creating or maintaining on any premises an amount of decaying matter, animal or vegetable, that is not part of an agricultural or farming operation, so as to contaminate the atmosphere and be offensive to the senses and obstruct the free enjoyment of life and property; or
- (6) Maintaining a dangerous structure (see definition) for more than thirty (30) days without securing such property against entry, or abating the dangerous condition of such structure.
- (7) Nothing that is done or maintained pursuant to a permit issued by the city or the state shall be deemed a public nuisance.

(8) Violations of this section shall be cited into Municipal Court as criminal citations, subject to penalties as provided in BMCC Sec. 1-110. Violations of this section may also be grounds for a civil abatement action as provided in this article.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 3, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-304. - Enforcement.

Upon written or oral complaint of any citizen so affected by an alleged public nuisance, or if an enforcement officer becomes aware of a condition or situation that may constitute a public nuisance, the enforcement officer shall investigate the condition or situation within a reasonable period of time. The enforcement officer shall determine whether such condition or situation constitutes a public nuisance. If the officer finds that there exists a public nuisance as defined herein, such officer shall give written notice to the owner of the premises and the responsible person who is maintaining or creating such public nuisance of the specific nature of the violation.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 4, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-305. - Right of entry.

- (a) A person may make a complaint of the existence of a public nuisance to a code enforcement officer, a fire marshal, the city administrator or his designee, or the community development program administrator. Such complaint shall include, whenever possible, the nature of the public nuisance, the location, including the address, the name of the owner, occupant, or manager of the property, the duration of the nuisance and the name and address of the complainant. Complaints shall be referred to the appropriate code enforcement officer.
- (b) The enforcement officer will contact the owner of the premises and the responsible person, either in writing or by telephone, prior to entry upon an individual's property. The purpose of this initial contact is to request consent to be on the property. If the owner or responsible person does not consent to entry onto the property, the officer will obtain a search warrant prior to any entry onto private property, unless exigent circumstances exist so that entry is necessary to prevent physical harm to the officers or other persons, the destruction of relevant evidence, or some other consequence improperly frustrating legitimate law enforcement efforts.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 5, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-306. - Emergency abatement.

- (a) Whenever an enforcement officer has reason to believe that a public nuisance exists, and that such public nuisance constitutes an emergency presenting imminent danger of serious injury to persons or property, the administrative enforcement officer, his authorized representative, a fire marshal, or a police officer may immediately enter into any building or upon any premises within the jurisdiction of the city for purposes of inspection or abatement.

(b) Whenever a public nuisance exists which constitutes an emergency presenting imminent danger of serious injury to persons or property, an enforcement officer may order, without notice or judicial action, that the public nuisance be immediately summarily abated by removal, destruction or mitigation. If the owner or responsible person fails to comply with a such an order immediately, or cannot be located, within the time prescribed, the ~~code~~ enforcement officer shall cause the structure to be demolished and removed, or the nuisance otherwise abated or mitigated, either through an available public agency or by contract or arrangement with private persons, ~~and the~~ The cost of such abatement shall be paid by the owner of the property upon which the nuisance existed, pursuant to the procedures established in section 13-308.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 6, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-307. - Voluntary abatement.

Unless a public nuisance constitutes an emergency presenting imminent danger of serious injury to persons or property, the ~~code~~ enforcement officer shall afford the owner of the premises or the responsible person ten (10) days to voluntarily abate the public nuisance. The enforcement officer must give written notice ~~in person or by certified mail~~ of the specific condition or conditions to be abated and the specific abatement required to the owner of the premises and the responsible person. Such 10-day notice shall be served by personal service or certified mail, return receipt requested, to the owner or responsible person. If the enforcement officer, after good faith efforts, is unable to serve the 10-day notice by personal service or certified mail, the 10-day notice may be served by mailing the notice to the owner and responsible person's last known address via standard U.S. Mail and posting the notice conspicuously on the premises where the violation exists.

Such written notice shall include a voluntary abatement agreement for the owner of the premises' signature and the responsible person's (if different than the owner) signature. Such signed agreement shall be returned to the enforcement officer and will be placed in the public record of the complaint. If the responsible person is different than the owner of the premises, both parties must sign the voluntary abatement agreement.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 7, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-308. - Abatement and collection of costs.

The remedies specified in this section shall be in addition to all other remedies provided by law. When a public nuisance has not been voluntarily abated within the time specified in the notice to abate, the following procedure shall apply.

- (1) The city may bring ~~an~~ a civil action in the municipal court to have the nuisance declared as such by the court and for an order enjoining the public nuisance or authorizing its restraint, removal, termination or abatement, ~~by the owner or the person who caused the nuisance or the person who allowed the nuisance to be~~

~~caused or to continue or an administrative officer, his authorized representative, a police officer, a code enforcement officer, a community service officer or any person under contract with the city to perform such services.~~

- (2) The action to declare and abate a public nuisance shall be brought by the city in the name of the people of the city, by the filing of a complaint, which shall be verified or supported by an affidavit. Summons shall be issued and served as provided by state law for civil cases. If the owner or responsible person cannot be personally served after good faith efforts, service may be made by publication as provided in state law for matters concerning real property.
- (3) A notice of appearance shall be served with the summons and complaint. The appearance date shall be not less than twenty-one (21) days from the date of service of the summons and complaint. The trial shall be held upon the appearance date, unless the court grants a continuance for good cause shown.
- (4) The respondent shall file a response on or before the appearance date set forth in the notice of appearance.
- (5) Upon the date and at the time set for appearance and trial, if the respondent has filed no response and fails to appear and if the city proves that proper service was made on the respondent at least twenty-one (21) days prior to the appearance date, the court may grant such orders as are requested by the city; except that, the court shall order that enforcement by the city be stayed for ten (10) days and that a copy of the court's order be mailed to the respondent at his last known address. Failure to appear on any other date set for trial shall be grounds for entering a default and judgment thereon against a non-appearing party. For good cause shown, and prior to enforcement, the court may set aside an entry of default and the judgment entered thereon.
- (6) The judgment of the municipal court may be appealed to the district court.
- (7) The procedure for determining the cost of abatement of a public nuisance will be as follows:
 - a. Code enforcement staff will secure a contract for removal of the nuisance by following the usual city procurement process. Code Enforcement may utilize City resources, including staff and equipment, to complete some or all components of a court ordered abatement, and the fair market value of utilization of staff and equipment shall be assessed in accordance with this section.
 - b. Code enforcement staff will coordinate the abatement project with the contractor, and oversee the work as it is being performed.
 - c. After the planning director and the code enforcement staff have approved the final bill it will be forwarded to the city finance department for payment.
 - d. A copy of approved bill(s) and proof of disbursement is placed in the code enforcement file maintained by code enforcement staff. These documents, along with the itemized abatement expense report are used to determine the total cost of abatement for the property. Costs that may be included on

the abatement expense report are shown in subsection (7)(h) below. The abatement expense report is then certified and transmitted to the finance department for approval of assessment on the real property being abated.

- e. The property owner will then be sent an abatement expense report for the subject property and be given notice that any assessment that is not paid shall become a lien upon the property and is enforceable in the same manner as the nonpayment of property taxes. The interest fee will be waived for any payments made within thirty (30) days of notice.
- f. A summary listing of the assessments, tax codes, and property owners will be kept by the clerk and recorder through August 31 of each year, and the list shall be presented to the department of revenue for billing on the next real property tax statement.
- g. A special abatement fund will be established to account for costs, collections, and transactions necessary to the efficient operation of the program. Assessment funds collected are returned to the designated abatement account for future use on other involuntary property abatements or for transfer back to the city general fund.
- h. The city shall determine the actual costs of cleanup and involuntary abatement actions and document such costs. The following expenses will be assessed as the actual costs of abatement of a nuisance condition:
 1. Planning staff time/mileage/other costs.
 2. Police department staff time/mileage.
 3. Other involved city staff time/mileage/other costs.
 4. Postage/mailing costs.
 5. Other direct costs associated with abatement.
 6. An interest fee of six (6) percent per annum computed on above costs which will be waived if the total cost of abatement is paid by the property owner within thirty (30) days of notice.
- i. The code enforcement staff has the discretion to coordinate and incur reasonable costs and services necessary for the safe, effective, and efficient cleanup of designated involuntary abatement properties. The code enforcement staff will notify the city administrator before any additional contracted costs in excess of ~~one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00)~~ ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) are incurred.

(Ord. No. 04-5280, § 8, 5-10-04)

Sec. 18-309. - Public urination and defecation prohibited.

It is unlawful for any person to urinate or defecate in any street, alley or public place except in a facility provided for that purpose.

(Ord. No. 86-4714, § 1, 9-8-86)

Section 2. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall be effective thirty (30) days after second reading and final adoption as provided by law.

Section 3. REPEALER. All resolutions, ordinances, and sections of the City Code inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed.

Section 4. SEVERABILITY. If any provision of this ordinance or the application thereof to any person or circumstances is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the other provisions of this ordinance which may be given effect without the invalid provisions or application, and, to this end, the provisions of this ordinance are declared to be severable.

PASSED by the City Council on first reading this 13th day of May 2013.

PASSED, ADOPTED and APPROVED on second reading this 28th day of May 2013.



CITY OF BILLINGS

By Thomas W. Hanel
Thomas W. Hanel, Mayor

ATTEST:

By Cari Martin
Cari Martin, City Clerk