

GALVESTON COUNTY

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Angry RV residents speak out against proposed rules

- [By JOHN WAYNE FERGUSON The Daily News](#)



Paulette Janak of Bacliff speaks to Galveston County Commissioner Darrell Apffel during a community meeting in Bacliff on Wednesday, Feb. 13, 2019 to discuss proposed rules for RV occupants and parks.

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Two weeks after Galveston County Commissioners delayed a vote on putting new restrictions on recreational vehicles and the parks they're in, hundreds of people, many of them confused, angry and aggrieved, turned up at the Bayside Regional Community Center on Wednesday night to let their county commissioner, Darrell Apffel, know what they thought of the rules.

Judging by the tenor of the room, they didn't like it.

The mood in the community center was fraught. Without the aid of a microphone or sound system, Apffel attempted to answer questions about the county's plans and how people might be affected by the rules.

Apffel was interrupted by people shouting for him to speak louder. One person called the county's proposal "Communism," and others shouted "Nazism." Others vented their frustration at county code inspectors or the San Leon Municipal Utility District.

"This is about more than RVs," said David Jetelina, the owner of a Bacliff RV park who helped rally people into attending the meeting. "This is about discrimination, prejudice, selective enforcement of the law that has no place in American society."

In January, Apffel, and the county's engineering department briefed county commissioners on a plan to expand county floodplain regulations to cover all unincorporated parts of the county.

The regulations would require that RVs parked in lots around the county be permitted, to be kept in working condition and be moved at least once every 180 days.

They would also require that RV park owners track the arrival and departure of people parking on their lots. If RV owners overstayed the 180-day limit, the park owners could be fined.

The county is rewriting its floodplain rules so it can remain compliant with standards set by the National Flood Insurance Program. In fact, most of the rules being talked about already exist in federally defined flood zones, Apffel said.

But officials want to expand those county rules to areas that aren't considered flood zones, because all of the county is under threat by rising water, they said.

Apffel also has said the rules would serve a second purpose: the removal of rundown or perpetually stationary RVs, which he called a nuisance and a crime attractor.

On Wednesday evening, attendees at the meeting — most of whom appeared to live or own property in the bay shore communities of San Leon and Bacliff — called those claims discriminatory, and said they worried the county's proposed rules would end up hurting older people, who live in RVs because that's all they can afford.

"Don't put them all in one basket," said Mona Free, a San Leon resident who attended the meeting. Longtime residents, those who have not violated any laws, should be allowed to continue to live under the current rules, Free said.

"Take the good eggs and leave them there, and take the bad eggs and throw them out," she said.

Jetelina and at least one resident of his RV park helped to rally some people to the meeting, posting handmade flyers around the dozens of RV parks in Bacliff and San Leon.

The hope from most attendees was the county would take its time in passing new regulations.

"I hope they really sit back and really think about what they're doing," said David Dillman, a charter boat captain who works out of Eagle Point. "It's always been said that it's hell to be poor. So, give these people a break."

Apffel did not return a phone call on Thursday afternoon. After the meeting, an aide said Apffel's office would adjust the regulations based on feedback from the meeting before reintroducing it to commissioners court.

Commissioners' next regularly scheduled meeting is on Feb. 25.

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