

CITY OF LEWISTON

CITY COUNCIL

AUGUST 25, 2026

SPECIAL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL ROOM AT 6:00 P.M.

THE HONORABLE CARL L. SHELINE, MAYOR, PRESIDING.

PRESENT: Mayor Sheline, Councilors Nagine, Longchamps, Harriman, Noble, Chittim, and Martel, City Administrator Bryan Kaenrath and Deputy City Administrator Brian O'Malley. Absent/Excused: Councilor Roy. Note – The City Charter permits the Mayor to cast a vote in the absence of a City Councilor.

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

PUBLIC HEARING AND FIRST & FINAL PASSAGE FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE MORATORIUM ORDINANCE REGARDING RENT INCREASES FOR LOTS IN MOBILE HOME PARKS

Mayor Sheline opened the public hearing.

Eryn Soule, Ward 5 – Rent control caps what a property owner can charge does not reflect the costs of operating the property. When revenue is frozen, owners may cut back on maintenance, close the mobile home park, or sell. A rent control cap sends a wrong message and shows the city is not business friendly.

Lisa Jones, Ward 2 – Submitted a Freedom of Access to learn how the need for this meeting came about. City Council is in charge, not City Attorney. A special City Council meeting was requested a while ago to address gun violence, and it was denied. The new Council President promised transparency, but it has not been demonstrated yet. Owners of mobile home parks have been very clear about the impact if this ordinance goes through. Lewiston residents want a safe city; this should be your priority.

Janet Beaudoin, Ward 2 – Speaking on behalf of a constituent who is opposed to the moratorium extension. Parks are privately owned businesses. Make financial and legal details public and make sure the park owners and residents receive a fair process.

Craig Saddlemire, Ward 4 – Chair of Housing Committee, speaking as one member of the committee. He noted the Committee did not request the extension of the moratorium which was noted in the agenda material. The Committee is continuing work on the ordinance.

Erica Robert, Ward 7 – Realtor, was representing Sunset Gardens, a mobile home park that was for sale. There was a potential pending sale, but the prospective buyer withdrew when the lot rent ordinance was announced and devalued the park by 26%. Rent freezes do not address the problem of housing which is the high cost of maintaining a property and have a negative impact on marketing. Should focus on increasing affordable housing options. Please reject proposal. This is a private business sector that should not be regulated. If park owners cannot afford to maintain the area, the parks will fall into disrepair.

Laurie Horton, Ward 2 – Park owner, was scheduled to sell August 1 and leave for cross-country

trip, all fell through when the rent control ordinance was proposed. Park owners are local and have kept past increases to the minimum to support the residents. State implemented new laws in September and these restricted the amounts lot rents can increase annually. Do not need to extend the moratorium, city does not need to be involved in this issue because the state is already regulating it. The Council failed to do due diligence. The proposed limit is not sustainable.

Dash Padham, Ward 3 – Time to get more information and more presentations on this topic before doing a final passage right away. Another six-month moratorium puts both park owners and tenants in an unfair holding pattern. Recently resigned from Housing Committee because of disagreements with direction of committee on this topic.

John Gerry, Ward 6 – Resident of Fox Run mobile home park. The previous speakers stated the passage of this will give the wrong message to investors. There have been no investments in new parks since 2003. Ordinance says owners can set market rate, whatever the market will tolerate. Approval extension of moratorium to avoid a gap in coverage, that gap will create legal issues.

John Horton, Ward 2 – Understand need for affordable housing. The Governor's Office sent this ordinance to all towns, and the Maine Labor Climate Council told the city mistruths about the topic. No one asked the obvious question – is an ordinance needed in Lewiston? No park has been predatory in nature, we have opened our books to the Housing Committee to review. The proposed ordinance will be hard to manage and cause implementation issues for park owners. Have run his parks for 18 years. Or may have to close the parks, subdivide into housing lots and storage unit lots. No resident has been harmed so far but park owners have been.

Chris Saroie, Ward 1 – Owner of Sunset Gardens mobile home park. There seems to be a misconception that park owners are flush with cash, rich and greedy. This is not the case. All profit is reinvested into park improvements and maintenance. In five months of meetings, the question has never been asked if rent stabilization is necessary. Believes the proposed ordinance was not created to assist residents but a political endeavor instead.

Nicole Penfield, Regional manager for Beauvita Communities – they operate three parks in Lewiston. Asked Council to seriously consider what private businesses are allowed to earn. Purchased Country Lane and Stetson Brook in 2024. They have issued one rent increase per year averaging \$37. The average lot rent in these communities is \$473 per month. This is compared to \$1650 for a 2 bedroom apartment rent for one month. Parks maintain private roads, water and sewer infrastructure, electrical systems, drainage, landscaping, trash removal and common areas. Work with residents though payment plans if needed. A private business cannot absorb every financial issue however. Capping revenue does not cap expenses. Have land available but will not expand if ordinance is approved to limit the potential income.

Katie Lauzie, Lewiston resident – Housing Committee member but comments are her own. Believes housing is a human right. The Committee has worked for months to seek a balance. We have not looked at data from current park owners. The data shows an affordability problem. It does not support the claim that park owners are the cause of the problem. Park rents are fair and within market rate. This ordinance could put parks at risk and therefore the housing of all of the tenants at risk as well. Ordinance will have a chilling effect on real estate purchases. Urged Council to vote against continuation of moratorium.

Michelle Ames, Brookside Mobile Home Park owner – The state law allows towns to create ordinances if the state law language does not address the local issues. She believes the state law does address issues in Lewiston and a local ordinance is not necessary. The lot rent increases in her parks average \$15.72 a year. Expenses such as insurance, worker's comp, wages, etc have all increased sharply. Park has 30 lots and their assessment just increased by a million dollars. Create a problem to subsidize lot rents for tenants who need it, because not all park residents need it.

Matt Agren, Ward 4 – Urge Council to vote against. Sets a horrible precedent that the city regulates the profits for private businesses. This undermines small business owners. The rents in Lewiston are not off the chart.

Adam Cranse, Assistant Regional Manager for Beauvita Community. The time under the moratorium was to answer two questions – whether rents in Lewiston are fair and whether park owners can still earn a fair return on their investment. This process has not answered either as of yet. No data showing residents are being overcharged, no evidence that language already in state law are not working. Do not extend moratorium.

Mayor Sheline then closed the hearing.

VOTE (1)

Motion by Councilor Chittim, seconded by Councilor Nagine:

That the proposed Moratorium Ordinance regarding Rent Increases for Lots in Mobile Home Parks, to be effective September 29, 2026, receive first passage by a roll call vote.

Passed - Vote 5 – 2 (Councilors Longchamps and Martel opposed.)

VOTE (2)

Motion by Councilor Chittim, seconded by Councilor Nagine:

To waive Section 3 of the Rules Governing the City Council and to allow for final reading at this time.

Did Not Pass - Vote 4-3 (Councilors Longchamps, Noble and Martel opposed.) (Note – Since this motion was to waive the Rules, a 2/3 majority – minimum of 5 affirmative votes – was required for passage. As such, this motion failed.)

Since the motion to waive the Rules and allow for a final passage at this time did not pass, the motion for final passage was not brought forth.

VOTE (3)

Motion by Councilor Chittim, seconded by Councilor Martel:

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To adjourn at 7:07 P.M. Passed - Vote 7-0

A true record, Attest:

Brian T. O'Malley
Deputy City Administrator
Lewiston, Maine