

**BRIEFING PAPER**  
**City of Spokane**  
**Planning Services Department**  
**October 28, 2015**

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**Subject**

Proposal to amend Spokane Municipal Code to allow electric fences in commercial and industrial zones.

**Background**

Electric Guard Dog LLC is seeking a Text Amendment to the Spokane City fence code, to allow business owners in commercial and industrial zones to install electric fence security systems. The current code does not permit fences or barriers charged with electricity in residential, commercial, downtown, or industrial zones. In Residential Agricultural (RA) zones, the use is permitted for the containment of livestock only.

The text amendment is to allow the installation of electric fence security systems with the following features:

- Powered by commercial storage battery not to exceed 12 volts DC.
- Battery is charged primarily by a solar panel; can be augmented by commercial trickle charger.
- Electric fences shall have a height of ten feet.
- Electric fences shall be completely surrounded by a non-electrical fence or wall that is not less than six feet.
- Location: Permitted on any non-residential outdoor storage areas.
- Warning Signs: electric fences shall be clearly identified with warning signs at intervals of not less than sixty feet.
- Electric fences shall be governed and regulated under burglar alarm regulations and permitted as such

The Plan Commission held a workshop on this matter on August 28, 2015. Concerns were raised about allowing electric fences in General Commercial (GC) zones due to close proximity to residential zones and negative aesthetic impact. Plan Commission also recommended that additional community outreach may be needed to garner feedback on the proposal.

After the workshop, staff worked with the applicant to draft code language to allow electric fences in Light Industrial (LI), Heavy Industrial (HI), and General Commercial Zones (GC). The applicant would like to include GC zones as part of the proposal moving forward. To address concerns, the applicant provided language to help minimize negative impacts. This includes not allowing electric

fences within 150 feet of residential property, schools, or daycare facilities, unless exterior perimeter fence (the non-electric fence) is covered with a solid covering (e.g. solid mesh, slats, etc.). The goal is to prevent further contact with the electric fence. In addition, an indemnification clause was added which states users will hold the City harmless in case of injury, death, or property damage as a result of electric fence use.

### **Impact**

Electric fences are a tool to deter crime. This change would impact all General Commercial, Light Industrial, and Heavy Industrial zones in the City of Spokane (see attached map).

### **Funding**

This is a private application. The applicant has paid the application fee required for text amendments.

### **Action**

This is a workshop to provide an update to the Plan Commission and introduce draft changes to the Spokane Municipal Code. The Plan Commission is being asked to explore the proposed draft and determine if the proposal is ready to go to a hearing.

#### Attachments:

- Proposed text changes to SMC 17C.120.310 and 17C.130.310
- Affected Zones Map
- Text amendment application
- Summary of Electric Guard Dog Security System
- YRC Site Plans
- The University of Wisconsin Madison Safety Report