

Elizabeth Hansen

From: AJ Johnson <Ajohnson@urbandale.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 11:25 AM
To: Elizabeth Hansen
Subject: RE: Massage Parlors
Attachments: Rainbow Massage-2646 100th.pdf; Kiki Massage-7020 Douglas.pdf

Elizabeth,

Our ordinance currently prohibits “stand alone” massage parlors. We have worked with Police on several problem properties in Urbandale, 2 of which we sent the attached letters.

As the letters state, “Massage Parlors” are listed in the Standard Industrial Classification Manual (SIC) as “7299: *Miscellaneous Personal Services, Not Elsewhere Classified*”, which is a code listing that is not included in any of the City’s commercial/retail zoning classifications.

Therefore, massage services are allowed only if it is among other services offered by “*Health clubs or spas, beauty spas or reducing salons, and similar health and beauty services, but not including lodging*”, which is permitted in the “C-N” NEIGHBORHOOD CONVENIENCE DISTRICT. We ask for a narrative from every prospective tenant that details exactly what services will be provided as part of the business to help staff determine if the proposed use is allowed.

A.J. Johnson
City Manager
City of Urbandale
515-331-6705



From: Elizabeth Hansen [<mailto:ehansen@windsorheights.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 8:40 AM
To: AJ Johnson
Subject: RE: Massage Parlors

Good morning AJ,

With the recent article and concerns with human trafficking and massage parlors, my Council would like to discuss this at an upcoming meeting.

Did Urbandale make any amendments to your code, permitting, etc.?

Sincerely,
Elizabeth A. Hansen, ICMA-CM, ICMC

City Administrator
City of Windsor Heights (pop. 4875)
1145 66th Street, Suite 1
Windsor Heights, IA 50324
Ph 515/279-3662
www.windsorheights.org

Elizabeth Hansen

From: Sanders, Scott E. <SESanders@dmgov.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:39 AM
To: Elizabeth Hansen
Cc: Warburton, Joyce M.; Wingert, Dana D.; Delafield, Phillip M.; Donovan, SuAnn M.
Subject: RE: Massage Parlors

Elizabeth,

As I recall we pursued it from a law enforcement angle. I do not believe we have recently changed any ordinances impacting these establishments.

We did halt illegal living arrangements on site not zoned for residential that were remedied.

I have cc'd directors that have more history on this topic if I have missed something or they want to add more detail.

Scott

From: CityManager
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 10:17 AM
To: Sanders, Scott E.
Subject: FW: Massage Parlors

From: Elizabeth Hansen [<mailto:ehansen@windsorheights.org>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2016 8:47 AM
To: CityManager <CityManager@dmgov.org>
Subject: RE: Massage Parlors

Good morning Scott,

With the recent article and concerns with human trafficking and massage parlors, my Council would like to discuss this at an upcoming meeting.

Besides the heightened police investigations, did Des Moines make any amendments to your code, permitting, etc.?

Sincerely,
Elizabeth A. Hansen, ICMA-CM, ICMC
City Administrator
City of Windsor Heights (pop. 4875)
1145 66th Street, Suite 1
Windsor Heights, IA 50324
Ph 515/279-3662
www.windsorheights.org

Des Moines identified as top 100 human trafficking site

Message Parlors raise questions across the metro

Lee Rood, lrood@dmreg.com 7:14 p.m. CST November 16, 2016

TOP TRENDING

 [Donald Trump protest walkout at E](#)
(<http://www.desmoinesregister.com>)



(Photo: Brian Powers/The Register)

0:24

0:40



Des Moines has been identified by a national anti-human trafficking organization as one of the country's top 100 sites for suspected massage-related trafficking.

Washington, D.C.-based Polaris began a [national initiative](http://polarisproject.org/initiatives/illicit-massage-businesses) in January to crack down on illicit massage businesses, including six raided last month in

Indianapolis.

Polaris identified Des Moines in the top 100 locales by scraping data from paid online sites, where customers review sex workers. It found eight locations in the city, according to Rochelle Keyhan, who is directing the national effort.

"We found 45 (locations) in Iowa and eight in Des Moines," she said. "Those are conservative estimates. Law enforcement typically identifies 150 to 200 percent more than our initial numbers."



DES MOINES REGISTER

[Concerns grow as massage parlors spread across Iowa](#)

(<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/>)

Keyhan said many massage workers trafficked in the U.S. originally come from China or Korea, and are shipped across the country from entry points on the coasts, such as Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York.

Talking about being forced into sex work is considered culturally taboo for most of the workers, she said. Polaris is trying to help shift the focus of law enforcement probes from low-level stings to organized crime investigations.

"People think these women are choosing this work, but they're not," Keyhan said. "Many of the women have been forced into mandatory retirement in China, and have no income and no means of surviving."

Polaris is working with law enforcement and government officials to help them recognize that traffickers often blend in next door to legitimate businesses.

"Many victims are recruited with promises of employment. However, when they arrive they are controlled by means of debts, threats of violence, blackmail, confinement, psychological manipulation, and in some cases, physical violence," the organization says. "Almost every aspect of their life is controlled — where they live, what they eat, where they go, what they look like and who they are allowed to talk to."

According to research at Rutgers University, the exotic massage industry in the U.S. could be doing as much as \$1 billion in business a year.

Yet Iowa's U.S. attorney offices in Des Moines or Davenport have not prosecuted a human trafficking case tied to massage parlors, a spokeswoman confirmed.

A top state law enforcement official said federal authorities have been contacted about activity at some massage parlors. But he acknowledged that until recently the state did not have the structure in place to address the wider concerns about human trafficking at the businesses.

Jim Saunders, who heads investigative operations for the Iowa Department of Public Safety, said local law enforcement agencies largely investigated complaints about massage parlors in their jurisdictions. Authorities suspect some parlors are linked to human trafficking networks, but those types of probes take time, he said.

State leaders this year established a central human trafficking office in the public safety department to quantify the problem, share intelligence and offer training to combat the crime, he said.

"We know it's there. FBI and Homeland Security have been given leads," he said. "But these really are complicated cases. These people are very adept at what they're doing. And they are very good at making an illegitimate business look legitimate."

Message Parlors raise questions across the metro

The Iowa Attorney General's Office this summer also hired a new coordinator for the state's human trafficking efforts.

TOP TRENDING

Belitsos said massage parlors promise to be raised as a concern at a human trafficking conference Thursday in Cedar Rapids. <https://www.foxnews.com/human-trafficking-not-in-our-town-tickets-27690872144>

 Donald Trump protest walkout at E (http://www.desmoinesregister.com)

Iowa legislators have passed legislation allowing trafficked youth to avoid delinquency prosecution. Some in the human trafficking network also want immunity for adult victims.

The human trafficking network also is supporting reintroduction of state legislation known as Erin's Law, a measure passed in 26 other states that teaches youth about sexual exploitation and abuse. School districts have resisted the effort, saying they already have full curricula.

Some lawmakers, meanwhile, want more focus on the problem by law enforcement.

"I think we've been a little blind to human trafficking in Iowa, both sexual and for labor," said state Rep. Marti Anderson, a Democrat from Des Moines who used to head the Crime Victims Assistance Division at the Iowa Attorney General's Office. "But if we don't look at it, it will just keep growing."

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Des Moines not alone in struggle with Illicit massage parlors

Lee Rood, lrood@dmreg.com 1:07 p.m. CST November 25, 2016



(Photo: Brian Powers)

Erotic massage businesses like [those growing in Iowa \(/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/\)](/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/) also are expanding across the United States.

Concerns about human trafficking, prostitution and unlicensed workers have prompted cities to take a mix of action, but the underground nature of the illicit parlors and their mobility make the industry hard to curtail.

A [Reader's Watchdog probe last week \(/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/\)](/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/) found more than two-dozen massage businesses were advertising in the Des Moines metro area on Craigslist and Backpage.com, with several using suggestive advertising to lure new customers.

The national anti-trafficking group Polaris has [identified Des Moines \(/story/news/2016/11/16/des-moines-identified-top-100-human-trafficking-site/93952890/\)](/story/news/2016/11/16/des-moines-identified-top-100-human-trafficking-site/93952890/) as one of its top 100 cities of concern.

State and local officials say constituents want them to weed illicit businesses, and some called on local, state and federal law enforcement to do more.



[DES MOINES REGISTER](#)

[Concerns grow as massage parlors spread across Iowa](#)

[\(http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/\)](http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/)

Steve Franklin, the community development director in Urbandale, said police have been investigating several massage businesses in that suburb.

Urbandale does not allow businesses that offer massages exclusively — without other spa services — to operate within the city. The city does not require business licenses, but it does require business owners to submit a narrative explaining the services they will provide, he said.

"We have to make an informed decision" about each business, he said. "If it seems professional, it might be OK."

SuAnn Donovan, who oversees neighborhood inspections for the city of Des Moines, said there's been no concentrated effort so far to address illicit parlors through local ordinances. The businesses are considered retail and don't require a local permit to operate, she said.

But the inspections division can take action if people are living in commercial buildings, she said. Commercial spaces don't meet the same building and safety codes required of residential homes.

The [Watchdog probe \(/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/\)](/story/news/2016/11/16/concerns-grow-massage-parlors-spread-across-iowa/93291274/) found arrests for prostitution and unlicensed workers have been made around the state. But Des Moines police say they have never been offered sex during a sting, and some of the businesses appear to be legitimate.

However, complaints of unlicensed activity at four businesses, including Lotus Spa in Beaverdale Place in Des Moines, are scheduled for discussion during a Dec. 6 meeting of the Iowa Board of Massage. That spa has been the focus of residents' concern, but the co-owner told the Watchdog the business is legitimate.

Watchdog made a request for the locations of the other three businesses but did not receive an immediate response.

The Board of Massage can take licensing action, but it has no enforcement authority.

Prosecuting massage parlors

Neither U.S. attorney's office in the northern or southern districts of Iowa have prosecuted recent cases involving human trafficking at massage parlors in Iowa.

Last month, a Wisconsin veterinarian, Brian Lee Kersten, was convicted of paying a New York madam to bring young Chinese women to Minnesota for work in massage businesses. He also helped transport East Coast prostitutes to hotels in Minnesota.

The New York woman would place ads in Chinese newspapers in Atlanta and New York recruiting women as masseuses. She flew them to the Twin Cities, and placed ads for their services online.

The women would receive \$20 of the \$80 they charged for massage services, plus tips for sex acts, according to the criminal complaint.

Kersten collected money from the prostitutes for the woman in New York and wired more than \$45,000 to China. Airport surveillance showed his vehicles picking up new women at the airport, according to the complaint.

In June last year in Utah, law enforcement conducted the largest human trafficking raid in state history, serving search warrants on 11 massage parlors. The owner of the parlor took half of what the women were paid for performing sex acts. The women had been trafficked illegally into the U.S.

A bust similarly heralded as Ohio's largest happened last year in January, when police raided four locations that were connected to human trafficking that stretched from China to New York to California.

Research: Business differs

Two years ago, the Urban Institute, a national policy think tank and research organization, completed a years-long study of the sex trade in eight U.S. cities, focusing extensively on massage parlors. The cities included Atlanta, Kansas City, Dallas, Denver, Miami, San Diego, Seattle and Washington, D.C.

Interviewing a mix of local, state and federal enforcement, they found that women hired in the massage industry mostly were of Korean or Chinese descent.

Some had entered the country on legitimate visas. Other women were smuggled into the U.S. by "snakeheads," who brought them via Panama, Guatemala, Mexico or Canada, accruing debts as much as \$50,000 per person.

Law enforcement in the different cities disagreed about how extensively women in the trade were likely victims of human trafficking.

In some cities such as Dallas, massage parlors operating in the sex trade appeared highly organized and, in some cases, could be traced to organized crime. In others, most of the women involved appeared to get their start in the trade in major cities such as Houston, Dallas or Seattle, then networked to open businesses offering prostitution in different cities.

"All the places want fresh girls every three to four weeks. It keeps the customer base going," a Denver law enforcement official told researchers. "The girls, they'll work three to four weeks, they'll make a bunch of money, they'll take a week off and then they'll get on the phone and call their friend who is in Houston who's getting ready to move somewhere else."

In cities like San Diego, police admitted the parlors were no longer a law enforcement priority. Many of the women involved, they said, came from remote parts of China, making it difficult to find translators to carry out investigations.

When city officials moved to crack down on the women living in the businesses, the women moved to nearby apartments, law enforcement said.

In Seattle, where the parlors have exploded in the last decade, some of the fronts for prostitution also offer tanning to diversify services, though women were not being accepted as clients.

Law enforcement there said the businesses appeared to also operate off-site prostitution, because receipts found at raids suggest they send thousands via Western Union back to China, much more than the massage business itself appeared to take in. The city saw a rise in brothels run in homes, along with massage businesses.

Using public nuisance laws

Elsewhere around the country, some cities have enhanced public nuisance laws to go after the businesses.

In Sandy Springs, Ga., for example, city officials beefed up the law so that they could obtain injunctions against property owners, as well as owners of businesses where sex is for sale.

Des Moines not alone in struggle with Illicit massage parlors

In Macon, Ga., where the illicit sex trade was thriving, local law enforcement were given authority in 2012 to conduct random inspections during work hours at the massage business. An ordinance required the businesses to have a license and made owners submit to background checks.

This year, the city of Los Angeles also filed a lawsuit against the owner of four massage parlors, citing the state's Red Light Abatement Law. The move came after parts of the city saw a spike in the illicit businesses after the state made massage therapy licensing voluntary, according to the Los Angeles Times.

In the ongoing lawsuit, the city attorney alleged the owners were running brothels, and advertised their services on Craigslist.

State nuisance law allows county attorneys and citizens to take civil action against nuisance businesses and the owners of the buildings in which they exist. Cities and counties often also have their own nuisance laws. State code also provides criminal penalties for public nuisances.

City council members and lawmakers from Des Moines say they are mulling what to do next.

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