

Signage

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currently there are many signs hanging around town that technically require permits.

"From an administrative standpoint and a public service standpoint, it doesn't make a lot of sense to be chasing them down constantly," he stated, adding that the proposed ordinance would create regulated exemptions to the permit process. "For example, the proposal would be to no longer require individual permits for banners, which are technically supposed to have a sign permit now, but further regulate where they can be and how they can be displayed. Owners wouldn't need to come in and get a permit, but yet their locations would be regulated such that some of the less-desirable things that we see wouldn't be able to occur anymore."

For example, banners couldn't be tied to fence posts driven into the grass of front yards, according to Mingo. Not only does it not look aesthetically pleasing, but the practice is potentially destructive and dangerous. Mingo said that people are driving fence posts into right-of-way property that could have fiber-optic, electrical and irrigation lines in it.

"The banners are one of the primary things that made us start to look at our ordinance again," he added. "It seems like there's a proliferation of banners and temporary signs that are really tough to control."

Clarifying and streamlining the ordinance will make it easier to take enforcement action, if necessary, Mingo said.

"If you have a clear definition of 'ay' or 'nay' without having to go back and do reviews ... it makes it easier," he stated.

Mingo said that Vermillion updated its sign ordinance in recent years with positive results.

"If you drive through Vermillion now, you'll see the difference in the number of banners and how they're displayed," he said.

The meeting next week will include a presentation and then an opportunity for the attendees to offer feedback. Mingo said that anyone with questions or suggestions can also call his office at City Hall.

"These are all just concepts for change right now," he stated. "I'm hoping we end up with a diverse crowd of business owners, sign contractors, sign installers and the general public in attendance to let us know what they think."

If approved at the Planning Commission level, the ordinance will get a couple of public hearings in front of the City Commission before final approval.

Auction

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servicing, it really looked to me like the troops and the families that were being served the meal greatly appreciated it, and it just gave me a good feeling to see that."

Huber then contacted Yankton Livestock Auction about doing an auction to contribute to the AABB.

"They were really excited about it," he said. "Since then, they've been great at promoting it and trying to make it a success."

Similar auctions in the past have raised between \$1,500 and \$45,000, depending on how many times the animal was resold and the size of donations.

Huber encouraged everyone to contribute to Friday's auction, saying it is a great way to show appreciation for the troops.

"My son over there said the South Dakota Guard unit received way more packages from home than anyone else," he said. "That gets noticed, and I think we need to keep putting out that good example that we do care."

For more information about the auction or how to make a donation, call the Yankton Livestock Auction sale barn at (605) 665-2999. For more information about the AABB, visit www.steak-fortroops.com.

Tour Bus Ignites Near Nevada's Hoover Dam

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Officials say a tour bus leaving the Hoover Dam suddenly caught fire as dozens of tourists were leaving the national attraction.

Bureau of Reclamation spokeswoman Rose Davis said the bus had exited a parking lot near the Hoover Dam Visitor Center at about 4 p.m. on Monday when the fire started.

Davis says the driver, a tour guide and 59 passengers fled the bus before it was consumed by the fire. No one was injured.

The fire caused some congestion as the attraction closed late Monday.

Nevada Highway Patrol Trooper Loy Hixson says the accident occurred on U.S. 93 near the Mike O'Callaghan-Pat Tillman Memorial Bridge, the only road connecting southern Nevada and Arizona.

Officials say the bridge remained open and the Hoover Dam would be open to visitors Tuesday.

Syria

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McCain, the GOP's presidential nominee in 2008 and his party's senior member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the U.S. should change policy by arming Syria's rebels and spearheading a military effort to support them.

"The only realistic way to do so is with foreign airpower," McCain concluded. "The United States should lead an international effort to protect key population centers in Syria, especially in the north, through airstrikes on Assad's forces."

McCain's proposal will likely divide American lawmakers, many of whom opposed a similar operation in Libya last year. Even if it were championed by the Obama administration and its NATO allies, the plan would divide other countries hostile to the Assad regime but unwilling to support another Western military intervention in the Muslim world. And it would be anathema to Russia, which sees Syria as its pri-

mary ally in the Middle East.

Unlike the international Libya campaign that ousted Moammar Gadhafi in Libya last year, military action against Syria would not have the backing of the U.N. Security Council and would be difficult to justify under international law. In many ways, it would also be a rejection of Obama's doctrine stressing international collaboration on applying military force.

Obama's strategy has been to use sanctions and international diplomatic isolation to pressure Assad into handing over power as part of a political transition. At the minimum, Western countries want aid guaranteed for civilians caught between Assad's forces and the increasingly militarized opposition, but are struggling even to convince Damascus and its Russian and Iranian backers of that.

Russia, alongside fellow veto-wielding Security Council member China, has stood by Assad even while his forces have killed thousands over the past year, rejecting two U.N. resolutions critical of the Syrian government. Negotiations on a narrower, third resolution are ongoing in New York, and the Kremlin again seems to be standing in the way.

"I hope that Russia now, after the elections and with a clear view, will see that it stands on the wrong side of history," said German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle. "The people in Syria who are standing up for democracy and their freedom need solidarity from the international community."

Speaking in Prague, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said an Arab League meeting this weekend would offer Putin a chance to work with the rest of the world on getting humanitarian assistance into besieged cities such as Homs, and recognizing "that there needs to be a new leadership in Syria."

State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Washington planned to immediately take up the Syrian issue with Moscow. She said the U.S. is open to compromise on U.N. action as long as Russia stopped trying to equate the Assad regime's violent repression of protesters with rebels trying only to defend their communities.

"We hope that their sense of humanity and compassion will encourage them to join us in pressing the Assad regime to silence its guns," she said.

The entreaties failed to make

an immediate impression on Moscow. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov instead drew attention to a months-old Russian resolution demanding that Syria's government and the opposition hold talks on reforms. The Russian approach would keep the levers of power in Assad's hands, while requiring his opponents to end their rebellion.

"I don't think there is a need for any new initiatives," Lavrov said Monday. He said other countries "shouldn't expect one another to take any action, but sit down together and decide what steps need to be taken so that the Syrians stop shooting at each other."

Syria is Russia's primary ally in the Middle East, having maintained close ties with Damascus since the Cold War, when the Arab country was led by the current leader's father, Hafez Assad. Putin, Russia's prime minister for the past four years, called last week for government and opposition forces to pull out of besieged cities, accusing the West of encouraging the rebels to fight by refusing to make that demand.

Western countries, meanwhile, added to the pressure and isolation against Assad on Monday.

The Obama administration added Syria's state television and radio to a U.S. sanctions list for its role in supporting the crack-down, while Canada joined the list of governments that have closed their embassies in Damascus to protest the violence.

McCain's call for airstrikes was a marked change from his remarks last month, when he said the U.S. should find ways to help the Syrian people without putting American "boots on the ground." Then, he said the options included providing medical care and technical assistance to safe havens for refugees of the violence.

He had since called for arming Syria's rebels, another step the Obama administration is hesitant to take. It fears a further militarization of Syria, and says the government's superior firepower in the form of tanks and artillery means funneling weapons to Assad's opponents may neither save lives nor accelerate the end of the regime.

Associated Press writers Geir Moulson in Berlin and Laurie Kellman in Washington contributed to this report.



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