

Franklin County ponders sex offender residency rules

By *DICK JOHNSON, Of The Globe Gazette*

HAMPTON — Franklin County supervisors may expand on the state ordinance prohibiting sex offenders who victimized minors from living near schools and day care centers.

The Franklin County ordinance also could provide restricted areas that prevent sex offenders from being within 2,000 feet of county parks or near school bus stops where many children gather, Supervisor Jerry Plagge said Thursday.

The issue will likely be addressed by the supervisors during their weekly meeting Monday.

“We may not do anything, or we may come back with an ordinance that is very restrictive,” Plagge said. “But this is a first step. We’ve had a couple conversations and we felt like, ‘Let’s get something in front of us, on paper, to start taking a look at it.’ ”

This week a Polk County ordinance went into effect, adding public parks, swimming pools, public libraries and multi-use recreational trails to the list of residency restrictions.

Several other communities in the state have also passed or are considering restrictions in addition to the state law.

“I would suspect an ordinance like that is probably going to be challenged,” Plagge said. “We’re not looking at moving too far away from the (state) code, just adding what we thought were some important areas.

“We want to avoid extremes. You get out too far, it’s probably going to be challenged and overruled. We’re not looking for that kind of issue to develop around it. We’re trying to find some middle ground here.”

Plagge said the public will have opportunities to provide input before an ordinance is passed.

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