

Area Zoning And Your Home Business

2007-04-20 04:53:42



All neighborhoods have regulations that pertain to zoning issues. Zoning is a process by which governments at all levels declare certain areas as primarily business, industrial, or residential in nature. Zoning may seem like a hassle, but these standards are put into place for very good reasons most of the time. Good zoning laws help keep neighborhoods clean and the residents healthy and unworried about potential hazards resulting from an illicit business.

Most people do not look into the zoning laws that govern their neighborhood before they start up their business, for the simple reason that they do not realize that their business might infringe on the rights and health of others. Dog breeders, for example, may think that their activities are not disturbing anyone. In fact, large numbers of puppies barking and running around at all hours can disturb the peace in the neighborhood and cause the prices of houses to go down. In this way, a home business can have a very real and detrimental effect on the well being of the rest of the neighborhood, even though the business owner did not intend for any negative fallout to happen.

Zoning is a complicated issue, with many areas having very old and outdated laws, some having no regulations at all, and neighboring jurisdictions having totally different zoning regulations. This is part of the reason why it is so important to check out the zoning for your own particular neighborhood. Another reason is the potential for a zoning violation. A lot of the time, a home business will not be disturbing anyone in particular and will continue to operate undetected. It only takes one person to blow the whistle on the operation, though. This person could be anyone, from a neighbor upset about the meetings you conduct in your home to someone who thinks that your material you store for your business is an eyesore. Disgruntled clients, former employees, or anyone with a grudge (including the fact that you get to work from home and they do not) can file a complaint against your business with municipal authorities.

When city hall receives a complaint regarding a possible zoning violation, they send an official out to check the situation over. If you are not operating your home business in violation of any zoning regulations, then you may continue with your business as usual. If, however, you are in violation, then you are expected to cease and desist operations immediately. Any further business conducted on the premises is subject to heavy fines, usually in the per day rate. Continued defiance will result in legal proceedings that may include contempt of court charges.

Thankfully, if you feel the zoning laws that prevent you from operating your business are outdated or unfair, you have the option of seeking a variance. A variance is a statement that allows you to do something that otherwise would be against the law, and comes in the form of a license. Applying for a variance depends on the municipality you live in and the type of zoning code you have violated, so it is best to check with the zoning department on how to go about filing for one.

If you don't really want to go through all the hassle of a variance, then you might try skirting around the issue where the zoning violation was incurred. If the problem is not with your business, for example, but rather with the amount of people who park in front of your house for regular meetings, you should try and arrange to hold these meetings at another location. This way, you no longer violate the laws and are able to continue with your business.