

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

December 18, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Councilman Denny Wayne Conference Room (Bush Building, 4th floor)
840 Boonville Avenue

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Heather Hardinger, Chair; Derek Lee; Craig Hosmer; and Callie Carroll.

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None.

COUNCIL

PRESENT: None.

STAFF

PRESENT: Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager; Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services; Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services; Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Duke McDonald, Assistant City Attorney; Anita Cotter, City Clerk; and Kristina D'Andrea, Executive Secretary.

GUESTS: Isabelle J. Walker, Blighted Property Work Group; Alice Barber, Springfield Tenants Unite; Michael Rodriguez, Jr., Springfield Tenants Unite; Colleen Appel, Springfield Tenants Unite; Sherry Buchanan, Springfield Tenants Unite; Madison Summers, Springfield Tenants Unit; Keatan Carpenter, Springfield Tenants Unite; Christopher Welch, Springfield Tenants Unite; June Skutnick, Springfield Tenants Unite; Rob Y. Garez, Springfield Tenants Unite; Beth Spindler, Springfield Tenants Unite; Paige Spindler-Richardson, Springfield Tenants Unite; Becky Volz, Neighborhood Advisory Council; Brent Haselhorst, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Brent Brown, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Jeff Kester, Greater Springfield Board of Realtors; and Todd Thomas, Eagle Management & Realty One.

Councilmember Heather Hardinger, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 12:01 p.m., and roll call was conducted. Present: Derek Lee, Callie Carroll, Craig Hosmer, and Heather Hardinger. Absent: None.

Councilmember Craig Hosmer moved to approve the minutes of the November 20, 2024, meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Derek Lee and approved by the following vote: Ayes: Carroll, Lee, Hosmer, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager, introduced Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services, to discuss the Rental Inspection Program.

Mr. Gugel referred to the PowerPoint slides which summarized key takeaways for feedback received from stakeholders regarding the City's future rental inspection program. He noted the stakeholders included Springfield Tenants Unite (STUN), Springfield Apartment and Housing Association (SAHA), and the Greater Springfield Board of Realtors (GSBOR). Councilmember Hardinger addressed the stakeholders present for the meeting and advised each person would have five minutes to speak.

Brent Haselhorst, board member for SAHA, was the first stakeholder to speak. The PowerPoint slide for landlord feedback was also presented. He discussed how downtime due to inspections during vacancy impacted loss of income for landlords which could lead to costs being transferred to future tenants. He expressed concern for types of inspections and discussed the rental inspections checklist for Phelps Grove subdivision, and recommended a similar checklist be utilized for the City's rental inspection program.

Councilmember Hosmer asked Mr. Haselhorst if he preferred inspections to be performed during occupancy or vacancy. Mr. Haselhorst responded by expressing his preference for inspections during occupancy. He discussed the City of Nixa's allowance for tenants to move into a home during the rental inspection process, with a fee.

Councilmember Hosmer asked for clarification regarding the recommendation for inspections to occur every seven years. Mr. Haselhorst responded by expressing his preference for all units to be inspected every seven years. Councilmember Hosmer recommended a hybrid system for properties owned by landlords in compliance be inspected every five to seven years and properties owned by non-compliant landlords be inspected every two to three years.

Councilmember Hosmer requested clarification regarding the City allowing thirty days for repair of any life-safety items. Mr. Haselhorst responded the inspection time frame should be tied to the seriousness of the repair and compliance period. He recommended a tiered system on severity with 90 to 100 days be allowed to repair the most severe and significant items.

Councilmember Lee asked for clarification on the initial heat-based scope recommendation. Mr. Haselhorst responded a heat map based on a higher concentration of fire and police responses and vacant buildings be considered for the initial launch of the rental inspection program as opposed to newer construction.

Councilmember Hardinger introduced the next speaker, Alice Barber, a member of STUN. The PowerPoint slide for tenant feedback was also presented. Ms. Barber discussed the need to focus on the health and safety of citizens and cease the degradation of affordable housing. She expressed support of prioritizing properties based on the age of the dwellings. She recommended the inclusion of apartment complexes as part of the rental inspection program. She expressed concern for displacement of residents and discussed displacement protection with alternative living arrangements while a unit underwent repairs. She recommended the

displacement protection be included in the City Code. She also discussed protection of privacy from landlords, previous tenants, and inspectors. She requested inspections to be performed during occupancy, every three years, without the presence of the landlord. She recommended the use of a grading system to reward compliance. She also expressed concerns with derailment by the landlord.

Councilmember Lee asked about a pilot program to see the scope and seriousness of the problem before the rental inspection program was launched throughout the entire city. Ms. Barber responded with expressed concerns about the location of the pilot program and targeting neighborhoods at high risk for displacement.

Councilmember Carroll noted the awareness of issues with a pilot program. She asked if STUN would approve of a pilot program in a neighborhood willing to be the beta neighborhood. Ms. Barber responded a pilot program in a neighborhood willing to be the beta neighborhood would be preferable.

Councilmember Hosmer asked about the frequency of inspections and whether STUN would agree to the hybrid program he suggested earlier to Mr. Haselhorst. Ms. Barber responded affirmatively and noted the recommendation of a grading system to award good landlords.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if the complaints received were primarily from tenants living in older homes. Ms. Barber answered affirmatively.

Councilmember Hosmer asked Jordan Paul, City Attorney, if the age of a structure could be considered a trigger for inspections as opposed to demographics. Mr. Paul responded affirmatively and noted documentation would need to prove the age of the structure directly correlated with the City's ordinance. Mr. Gugel verified the City's heat map directly correlated with neighborhoods with predominantly older homes. Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, noted the housing data displayed the same information.

Councilmember Hardinger introduced the next speaker, Jeff Kester, CEO of GSBOR. Mr. Kester discussed the burden of regulation and acknowledged the decrease in affordable housing stock as well as an increased need for a quality program to protect people from unsafe living conditions in Springfield. He noted GSBOR represented realtors and advocated for property owners' rights. He expressed support for an inspection program focused on life safety issues which was not overly burdensome and could benefit property owners. He expressed concern for inspections occurring during occupancy due to the possible burden this could place on owner and tenant. He expressed support for a multi-year inspection not attached to occupancy.

Councilmember Hardinger introduced Becky Voltz, chairperson for the Neighborhood Advisory Council. Ms. Voltz discussed housing not suitable for occupancy. She expressed her opinion these types of homes should be prioritized.

Councilmember Hardinger noted there were no additional speakers and turned the presentation over to Mr. Gugel.

Mr. Gugel addressed questions from the previous meeting. He noted there would be a new Licensing Representative with an annual salary of \$61,362.00. He briefly discussed electrical vehicles for inspectors and noted he had meetings with City Utilities and planned to have more discussions with them. He further noted a pilot program could be implemented as long as it was data driven triggered by age of structure and complaints.

Councilmember Lee asked if any additional data had been received from the Fire Department. Mr. Gugel responded affirmatively, and noted he would ensure the information was available to the Committee members. He also noted he received five years of data from the Fire Department.

Mr. Gugel discussed the focus of inspection, which would be single-family and duplex rentals, and inspections would occur once every five years and at the time of occupancy change.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if there would be exemptions for structures at or less than five years old. Mr. Gugel responded there would be exemptions on newer construction. Councilmember Hosmer recommended inspections every seven years, a scalable timeline beginning with a focus on properties aged 25 years and older, and be complaint-based.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if the program would include apartments. Mr. Gugel responded apartments were not included but could be if the Committee requested it. Councilmember Hardinger asked if apartments could be scaled into the program with a tentative timeline, as the initial focus would primarily be in single-family residential areas of highest need. Mr. Gugel responded affirmatively, and noted the inspections could be based on a heat map or all aged dwellings.

Councilmember Lee expressed his opinion for the need to collect data to determine the actual percentage of non-compliant landlords throughout the whole City. He expressed his opinion if the percentage for noncompliant landlords proved to be less than 1percent, then the inspection program may not be feasible. Councilmember Hardinger added the pilot program could provide the proof of concept for the rental inspection program and a scale for rentals citywide. Councilmember Hardinger also noted this would not deter inspections to be performed based on complaints received.

Councilmember Hosmer inquired about obtaining a warrant to enter a house if permission was not granted. Mr. Gugel responded this was an option, but the City had not had to obtain a warrant.

Councilmember Hosmer inquired about surrounding communities with inspection programs. Mr. Gugel responded the City of Nixa had a rental inspection program. Councilmember Hosmer inquired about Nixa's experience with their program. Mr. Gugel responded Nixa did not have many issues, and he would attempt to obtain Nixa's data.

Mr. Gugel discussed inspection frequency and scheduling for the time of occupancy change. He noted a goal would be to communicate with landlords ahead of the due date for inspections.

Mr. Gugel discussed exemptions, inspection items, and a fee or registration schedule, with a reinspection fee only charged if an inspector had to physically reinspected the property.

Councilmember Lee inquired about the fee schedule and the need for a licensing representative. Mr. Gugel responded this was based on the proposed revenue and estimated number of inspections which would balance the need for additional staffing.

Councilmember Hardinger asked what a proof of concept would look like. Mr. Gugel responded with an additional presentation of slides to provide an example of neighborhood service areas in the north and west portion of Springfield, and the estimated revenue, estimated resources/staffing, and projected five-year revenue versus cost. Councilmember Hardinger requested a few weeks to review, discuss, and make recommendations.

Councilmember Carroll moved to adjourn. Councilmember Lee seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, Carroll, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

The meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

Prepared by Kristina D'Andrea