

THE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

July 16, 2025

12:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Callie Carroll, Chair; Derek Lee; Monica Horton, and Heather Hardinger.

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None.

COUNCIL

PRESENT: Bruce Adib-Yazdi and Brandon Jenson.

STAFF

PRESENT: David Cameron, City Manager; Melissa Hart, Assistant Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Steve Childers, Director of Planning and Development; Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services; Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services; Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Duke McDonald, Assistant City Attorney; Anita Cotter, City Clerk; and Kristina D’Andrea, Executive Secretary.

GUESTS: Isabelle Walker, CPO Blighted Property Work Group; Jeff Kester, Greater Springfield Board of Realtors; Jennifer Moore, Valiant Group; Brent Haselhorst, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Ed Gray, Springfield Tenants Unite; Tom N. Cudeici, Springfield Tenants Unite; Faraji Council, Springfield Tenants Unite; Ezra Farrar, Springfield Tenants Unite; Faith Sheridan, Springfield Tenants Unite; Courtney Hittle, Springfield Tenants Unite; Blythe Spindler-Richardson, Springfield Tenants Unite; Paige Spindler-Richardson, Springfield Tenants Unite; Colleen Appel, Springfield Tenants Unite; Christopher Welch, Springfield Tenants Unite; Becky Volz, Neighborhood Advisory Council; Brendan Griesemer, Restore SGF; Brandi Morris, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Sean Carrell, citizen; Hope Davis, citizen; Marta Mieza, *Springfield News-Leader*; and Jackie Rehwald, *Springfield Daily Citizen*.

Councilmember Callie Carroll, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m., and roll call was conducted. Present: Derek Lee, Heather Hardinger, Monica Horton, and Callie Carroll. Absent: None.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger moved to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2025, meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Horton and approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Horton, Hardinger, and Carroll. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

David Cameron, City Manager, introduced Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services (BDS), to discuss the proposed Rental Inspection Program recommendations. Mr. Gugel provided an overview of the Rental Inspection Program's purpose and shared a draft ordinance for an 18-month pilot program in the West Central Neighborhood Service District. He outlined the timeline, processes for the Rental Registration License and inspections, success measures, available resources, and associated costs. He indicated the draft ordinance was designed to allow for future expansion as determined by City Council. He highlighted the age, layout, and number of structures within the parameters of the neighborhood as factors in selecting the West Central Neighborhood for the pilot program.

Mr. Gugel explained the inspection process from scheduling to obtaining a Certificate of Compliance. He noted the property owners would be required to live within the city's urban service area.

Mr. Gugel described how the software program, Tolemi, would be utilized by property owners and property managers to schedule and track inspections and pay fees. The data from this software would be available to the public.

Mr. Gugel outlined the eighteen-month plan, explaining the first four months would focus on hiring and public education for landlords and tenants in the West Central Neighborhood. Months five through sixteen would concentrate on inspections and necessary repairs, followed by a review phase in the final two months. The review phase would include a 12-month report which detailed success measures and corresponding metrics to determine the program's impact on the pilot neighborhood, financial feasibility, and expansion readiness. At the conclusion of the eighteen months, a report would be presented to City Council summarizing the program's effectiveness, feedback received, and any recommended adjustments.

Mr. Gugel discussed resources and costs to run the rental inspection program. He compared first-year costs to projected ongoing costs as the program would expand and the annual fees would increase. He demonstrated how costs were reduced by using in-house resources.

Mr. Gugel noted the pilot program in the West Central neighborhood would allow the City to refine the process.

Councilmember Carroll asked about enforcement for landlords who failed to register for inspections. Mr. Gugel responded the ordinance included steps to address non-compliance, which could involve Municipal Court costs and fines. He added, in severe cases, the City could disconnect utilities at the landlord's business, which was the reason property owners or managers were required to reside within Springfield's Urban Service Area.

Councilmember Carroll asked if an initial letter would be mailed to the property owner's residence. Mr. Gugel responded a letter would be mailed to the rental property, and if unsuccessful, BDS had resources to locate the property owner.

Councilmember Carroll inquired about the process for failed inspections and repairs not completed within the 30-day allotted time. Mr. Gugel responded an extension could be offered, but if progress was not made on the repairs, then the same process for code violations would be applied.

Councilmember Carroll inquired about the life-saving criteria. Mr. Gugle responded life-saving criteria would include structural issues, safety features, such as smoke detectors and outlet covers, and connections for food preparation. He noted the criteria would be any issues which would affect the life, health, and safety of the tenant.

Councilmember Horton expressed appreciation for the framework of the rental inspection program. She inquired whether the \$35 inspection fee could be included in Section 75-4(B). Mr. Gugel responded the fee was excluded to allow flexibility for potential changes in the future.

Councilmember Horton inquired about the timeframe allowed for rental property owners to achieve compliance prior to enforcement. Mr. Gugel responded this would be dependent upon the passage of the program by City Council and how much time City Council would allow for educating property owners and tenants. He also noted Tolemi would need to be installed and operational to engage with the property owners and establish a registration deadline. If the deadline was not met, BDS would initiate outreach to assist property owners in achieving compliance.

Councilmember Horton referenced Section 75-12 regarding multiple rental properties and the recommendation for inspecting up to 20 percent of properties. She inquired about the inspection timeline for the remaining properties. Mr. Gugel responded this Section was modeled after Lawrence, Kansas, and addressed a future increase in the number of rental properties. He clarified all rental properties would be inspected every five years, with a commitment to achieve 100 percent of inspections in the first year.

Councilmember Horton asked who would be responsible for issuing the rental license. Mr. Gugel responded the Tolemi software would allow BDS to handle everything between registration, collecting fees, licensing, and inspections.

Councilmember Horton referenced Section 75-12(C) regarding new construction being exempt from inspections for ten years. She asked if the rental license would be issued at the time the Certificate of Occupancy was granted. Mr. Gugel responded BDS was responsible for inspections during each stage of construction and remodel, which gave them first-hand knowledge if the property would become a rental unit. He clarified the owner would be notified upon receiving the Certificate of Occupancy that they also needed to register the rental property.

Councilmember Horton noted Section 75-14 was reserved. She inquired about adding an unlawful act to address evictions or lease changes made by landlords in retaliation against tenants for complaints. Mr. Gugel responded unlawful retaliation by landlords was a civil matter outside the legal scope of BDS's involvement. Councilmember Horton added the topic of tenants' right to counsel had been referred. She clarified BDS's primary focus would be the condition of the property and whether the landlord was operating with a legal rental license.

Councilmember Horton referenced Section 75-23(A)2 and inquired about the term “natural person” and if this was meant to distinguish between individuals and LLCs. Mr. Gugel responded affirmatively. Councilmember Horton asked if rental properties registered under LLCs would be exempt from Section 75. Jordan Paul, City Attorney clarified the exemption would be for the primary residence listed in the LLC.

Councilmember Horton referenced Sections 75-21 and 75-22 regarding utilities and the distinction between occupied and unoccupied properties. She asked for clarification on the occupancy of a rental property in Section 75-21 and inquired about tenants being notified prior to utilities being disconnected. Duke McDonald, Assistant City Attorney, responded the landlord’s primary residence or business would be disconnected, instead of the rental property, to avoid punishment of tenants when the landlord was not compliant.

Councilmember Horton referenced the list of exemptions in Section 75-23(A) and asked whether all the universities would be included. Mr. Gugel responded BDS did not intend to include university campuses and dormitories for inspections.

Councilmember Lee expressed appreciation to Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger and City staff for designing the rental inspection pilot program. He expressed support of the program and noted it would provide accurate data to determine the need for expansion across the city.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger expressed appreciation for those who advocated for and worked on the program. She asked whether inspections could occur prior to issuing the rental license. Mr. Gugel responded the program was primarily modeled after Lawrence, Kansas, which did not require inspections prior to issuing licenses as it would not be fiscally sustainable. He noted the draft ordinance did include the requirement to have the rental license displayed on the property, as well as a Certificate of Inspection which displayed the date the last inspection was completed for the purpose of transparency for the public.

Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger discussed Federal and State protections against retaliation toward tenants when a complaint was made. She asked for language to be added to the ordinance to include such protections. Mr. Paul explained he was unaware of specific Federal and State protections for tenants, except when actionable under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). He stated the City could not create private or civil causes of action, and if retaliation were included, the City would also need to determine whether criminal action should be addressed in the Ordinance. Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger expressed concern regarding retaliation. Mr. Gugel explained it was outside the scope of BDS, and tenants would need to seek legal assistance. Mr. Paul added this could encourage landlords and tenants to enter into written leases, which would make termination based on complaints more difficult. Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger asked if the ordinance could be amended during the pilot program should retaliation become an issue. Mr. Gugel indicated the ordinance was written to remain flexible.

Councilmember Horton discussed a scenario involving retaliation in which a tenant reported mold in a rental house and the landlord painted over it instead of correcting the problem. She

expressed support for adding language on retaliation and noted it could be listed as an unlawful act and as a second item in Section 75-20 for Municipal Offenses.

Councilmember Carroll discussed the need for temporary housing for tenants when major repairs were required for issues beyond the tenants' control. She noted the rental inspection pilot program would provide extensive information as 100 percent of rentals within the pilot neighborhood would be inspected. She also noted various viewpoints among City Councilmembers and recommended the pilot program be presented at a City Council Luncheon by Mr. Gugel.

Councilmember Carroll moved to send the Rental Inspection Pilot Program to the next City Council Luncheon for Mr. Gugel to present, obtain feedback from City Councilmembers, and discuss the feedback at the next Community Involvement Committee meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hardinger and approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Horton, Hardinger, and Carroll. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

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

The meeting adjourned at 1:08 p.m.

Prepared by Kristina D'Andrea