

Long Term Rental Stakeholder Meeting

November 10th, 2015 Meeting Minutes

Julie Banks- Introductions and background for audience

Melissa Wittstruck- Ground Rules

Mike Miller- Spokane Fire Department Presentation

- Does not track rental units NOVS; was able to track 820 possible rentals identified in Fire's system
- Of these 327 had one or more NOVs (39.8%) in 2014
- Importance of engaged management and local contacts
- Examples of SFD issues found in rental units (5 or more units)
- Currently operating under a compliance based enforcement system; no penalty for reoccurring offense.
- What's missing? System that provides inspection on an annual basis that is not based upon complaints, training/education, programs that rewards clean records and penalizes consistent offenders
- Possible solutions? Properly structured Rental Registration program, performance bonds for recognized repeat offenders, automatic late charges for late report submittals, changes to Municipal Code language.

Discussion

Q- Amazed by the services provided by SFD. Do not look at single family residences?

- a- Do not have jurisdiction over single family
- b- What percentage of these are single family residences?
- c- According to National Fire Academy data approximately 79-80% of residential fires are from single family residences
- d-
- e- I believe that this would include single family residences

Q-Of the 820 buildings you mentioned how many of those were actually apartment buildings?

- a- I believe that they all are.

Q-In terms of training programs do you think that should be something directed to the whole community to decide what that would look like?

- a- Yes we would include the whole community but there are some areas that we simply cannot ignore?

Q- Are the tenants the only ones that can make complaints?

- a- No we get/take complaints from anyone. We will respond to any citizen complaint. They're not always legitimate complaints but we'll investigate.

Q-What is the response time for complaints?

- a- If we get it early enough in the day we'll go out that dat. If it's late in the day we'll go out the next morning. Complaints tends to describe circumstances worse than what they actually are

Q- Any building with more than three units, how do you know that? Does someone check?

- a- No, if someone doesn't go through the official process for changing use I would never know and I would never go into those buildings and know if they have a sprinkler.

Q-If someone converted a basement into a makeshift apartment?

- a. I wouldn't know unless they go through the change of use process with the Building Department.

Q-What if someone dies in a fire and the building was out of compliance?

- a- We would identify the deficiency. If they were working to correct a deficiency then nothing would happen.

Q- Fire hydrant in South Riverton is watering the new plants? Proposal for 80 units going in where there were 3 single family residences, does the public have access to know if site flow has been addressed?

- a- Any permits are public record.

Q- A fourplex built in 70s should it have a fire suppression system or is it grandfathered in?

- a- It would be vested under the code it was built under.

Comment- Run down units house people that also need housing.

Q- What are the most common NOV's?

- a- Usually it has something to do with egress stairwells being blocked or garbage being stored in locations where they are not supposed to be. Fire takes into account that a manager has taken action against a problem tenant and tries to work with them. But other deficiencies that are seen will be written NOVs.

Q- When you respond to complaints, is there anything that would serve as incentive or deterrent to these complaints?

- a- There is nothing in the structure of the system that provides incentive

Q- Have any of your proposed solutions been proposed before?

- a- Just now. We're currently trying to go through the (Spokane Municipal) code to find any language deficiencies. I have other things on my agenda but this is near the top of the list.

Comment- I like your solutions; doesn't put everyone in the same pot. We should do a benefit assessment. Assessment should go to the areas that aren't benefit; non-compliant, reoffenders.

Phase 3

Comment- discusses Housing Authority model of regular inspections; reward program from three funders or compliance agencies. **Phase 3**

Comment- that's one of these things you suggests; a program that rewards compliance and penalizes "frequent flyers" **Phase 3**

Q- When you do an inspection do you look at wiring and so on?

- a- We do not look at that, generally we would write those up and request that the building inspector come do an inspection. We will look at everything but we would refer to building

Q- As a renter can I access the list of buildings with the most complaints so then I know not to move to that building?

- a- I do not have a list but if you gave me a specific address I could tell you how many NOVs are associated with that address. It would be through a Public Records Request and would be available.

Comment-The health department does list every restaurant and their inspections on their website.

Q- Cost of an inspection program? **Phase 3**

- a- Our process is to identify gaps and possible solutions as discussion. Any specifics would not be decided by this group.

Audience- personal property insurance- insurance companies would not renew insurance on substandard properties- **Phase 2 and 3- insurance**

Comment- weighted by infractions? Look at areas of strong successful fire programs and see what they've done to keep NOV's down.

Reoccurring NOV's- is there adequate education?

Landlord Association invited Fire Marshal to write an article or come speak.

Q-Do you ever find that maybe a tenant needs to be educated?

- a- Absolutely- very rarely are tenants exercising their rights and responsibilities under landlord tenant. **Phase 3**

Q- Discussed specific buildings- why city won't shut them down?

- a- Must reach a certain level before it can be shut down/do not occupy. When we do NOV's they are compliant in remedying.

Comment- Spokane Housing Ventures developed a pamphlet educating tenants on safety and fire reduction that are handed to each tenant at time of move in.

Housekeeping- No December meeting, back to second Tuesday of the month. ONS will send out a reminder and put together a review packet of what we have covered so far. Two meeting in February to hear presentations from legal discussing Landlord Tenant Act.

Phase 2- Identify existing policies and ordinances, look at enforcement, clearinghouse of those policies and laws.

Comment- I think we're missing a piece; we need to hear from the people that address these issues. What about the service provider that meet the needs of tenants? The Fair Housing report was filled with excellent information; who created this report and can we hear from them?

- a- It was done as part of a contract; ONS will provide more information.