

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, April 15, 2019
7:00 p.m.

Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Vickye James, Councilman Brent Sheldon, Councilwoman Tamu Graham-Reinhardt

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilwoman Maria Jones, Director of Development Vincent DeJoy, Deputy Fire Chief Sam Salemme, Director of Public Safety/ Police Chief Harry Snellings, Taylor Scott,

Councilwoman James called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the April 8th meeting were approved.

No members of the public appeared to address the committee.

General Discussion

Mr. DeJoy: I'd be glad to give you a little bit of an update from my report last week. This past week, we have been working with the programmers at Mygov, our code enforcement platform, to set up a module that will help us implement the rental registration process. It's going very well. We're working on the letter that will automatically be generated and sent out and we're trying to make it easier for those property owners to register their property. The letter will have a special identifier which they can log in to Mygov and give a link to it and login and most of the information will already be there. There are just a couple of fields to fill out such as how many units are in the house, their insurance company, more of the contact information including phone numbers, emails. Getting the property manager's insurance company policy and policy number. So, it will be a lot easier and it will make it easier on us to determine who actually hasn't complied. And once they've gone through, and it should just take a matter of minutes on the site; once they've completed it and filled out all the required fields, there will be a certificate that will be generated, kind of like a permit, so to speak. That will be emailed to them. They will have that and it will automatically remind them, it will be set up in the system to automatically remind them, start reminding them 60 days by email before it's due for next year.

The system is going to do a lot of the automating for us in terms of generating letters and helping us to, again, to determine who has complied and who hasn't complied. And as we stated last week, those that don't comply will be getting an automatic exterior inspection. It

doesn't mean that we have the access to the interior unless we are invited in. We will, in many occasions, especially if it looks like there are some serious code issues from the exterior, knock on the door and identify ourselves and if they are willing to allow us to come in to do an inspection, we will do so.

I have to disagree with the letter was published in the paper, in the Post Journal, yesterday with Mr. Lindquist. It's not a waste of time, it's not a waste of effort, it's not a waste of money and if the city was ever to contemplate something greater than what we have in our code for rental registration, we need to have a system devised on how we can actually interact with the owners of these properties. If we have a system and protocol down for the rental registration, anything further in the future would be far easier of a step. Issuing operating permits isn't going to radically change the housing issues that we have here. We have a lot of deep issues here. Much of it is, as the mayor said last week, is related to poverty. I don't care who the property owner is. If tenants are destroying properties then they have to also be held accountable too. It's not the property owners that are doing the littering and they're not the ones that are leaving unregistered vehicles, they're not the ones putting junk on porches. But again, as we stated last week, it's not the tenant that's responsible to have a roof that doesn't leak or painting that isn't peeling on the house or a hot water tank that isn't working or a furnace that isn't working. Again, we will follow up. If a tenant calls us and is having difficulty getting their landlord to respond, we will come in. If the tenant will let us in, we'll try to arrange a time to meet with them and go through the apartment and if there are some of those safety issues that appear to be the responsibility of the landlord then we will hold them accountable for fixing it. That's my update and I'm hoping by the next two weeks that we will go live with this new system. There are still some programming that they're working on to make it work for our specific requirements and we expect that it's going to be a very nice system and easy enough for anyone, a novice user of a computer can easily handle.

Councilwoman James: Vince you talked about a letter being generated. Will that be generated when they comply, when they go onto the site?

Mr. DeJoy: We've identified about 3,000 houses in the city, residential structures, that would be responsible for registering the property as rental property. What happens is, this letter is basically going to make the assumption that this is kind of a renewal. It's easier to start from that premise, that it's a renewal, versus starting from scratch. It will generate a letter that will tell them that they have thirty days to register the property. We'll tell them specifically, again there will be a unique identifier for their property, so you're not going to be able to have someone go on, some random person, and mess with their data and their information. So, it will be very secure in that respect. It will be available for Public Safety. We will give them a logon, especially the Fire Department, so that if they need to determine who the property manager is, there are some phone numbers if there is ever, God forbid, some type of an emergency, fire or whatever. They will have the information that we have.

Councilwoman Jones: Have you had times when things happened to buildings or properties and we had trouble finding out who the owner is?

Mr. DeJoy: We don't have any problem finding out who the owner is, finding out who the specific person is, a lot of them are hidden under names of limited liability companies and most of the times in faraway places, some are just p.o. boxes. We want a physical address of where to find these people too.

Councilwoman Jones: So, this form has all the information on it then.

Mr. DeJoy: Yes. They will need to put a physical address and not just a p.o. box of where to reach them.

Councilwoman James: Any other questions for Vince? Thank you so much.

Councilwoman Jones: Thank you for your update. When did you have a date for implementation?

Mr. DeJoy: It's going to be about two weeks. As soon as all the programming is done and we have our last training session, I believe it's on the 24th, internally.

Councilwoman James: I'm going to open it back up. Are there any comments from the community? Anyone else that would like to speak to the Housing Committee?

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Administrative Services/City Clerk