

**PROGRESS UPDATE
FOR
RENTAL HOUSING ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

September 23, 2008

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to:

- 1) update the City Council on the progress of the Rental Housing Advisory Committee's deliberations;
- 2) inform the City Council of the process improvement changes that have been made to accomplish the Committee's charge;
- 3) highlight the support from a majority of the Committee members to expand the scope of their recommended changes to all residential properties (rental and owner-occupied);
- 4) review the next steps in implementing proposed changes to the Rental Housing Code.

BACKGROUND

The Rental Housing Advisory Committee (RHAC) has been in operation for five months and has now held its seventeenth meeting. During this time, we have made significant progress in formulating alternatives to update the existing rental housing code for Council's consideration.

Staff utilized input from three sources to identify issues to be addressed by the RHAC:

- 1. Three citizen meetings identified several areas of concern
- 2. Code interpretation ambiguities and enforcement issues identified during inspections
- 3. National model codes adopted by the City or available from the International Code Council

A quick review of the RHAC's progress follows:

Number of issues identified for review	84
Issues completed as of 07-17-08	57
Issues where unanimous decisions were reached	47
Issues where two alternatives were developed, with one dissenting member	8
Issues where two alternatives were developed, with two dissenting members.....	1
Issues where two alternatives were developed, with three dissenting members ...	1

PROCESS IMPROVEMENTS

During the intervening months, several process improvement ideas have been brought forward by committee members. Although a complete listing of all process improvements would exceed the scope of this memo, some significant changes are noteworthy:

- The RHAC will always strive to reach a unanimous decision. When unanimous votes cannot be obtained, two alternatives will be presented with the vote tally given for Council's consideration. This will in effect give the Council two alternatives with majority/minority voting record.
- The RHAC has developed a category for issues where the developed alternatives should apply equally to rental housing units and owner occupied housing units. There is significant, if not unanimous, consensus that many of the property maintenance alternatives can and should apply to all housing units. Of the 57 items voted on to date, it is estimated that 49 of them will come with a recommendation that they apply to all residential properties, if they are to be applied to rental properties. (It should be noted that the staff has not solicited any input from private residence owners to determine their support for this concept.)
- The Committee has developed an alternative to the present appeals process. Currently, appeals for rental housing maintenance issues are heard by the Building Board of Appeals. The new alternative would create a Property Maintenance Board of Appeals with a different set of skills and interests than the Building Board of Appeals.
- Initially, staff developed and distributed in advance of each meeting, four to five alternatives for the committee members' consideration. Typically, the alternatives included the existing Ames ordinance, the National Model Code from the International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC), and two to three codes from similar cities. After the first 12 weeks, it was apparent that the committee was routinely choosing the IPMC language, either verbatim or with minor changes. As such, staff now provides the existing City ordinance and the IPMC for a starting point in the RHAC's deliberations. During the last four meetings, this change has proven to be acceptable to the members and has significantly speeded up the process.

NEXT STEPS

- Staff will prepare a final report highlighting the Committee's recommended changes to the Rental Housing Code
- Staff will distribute the report to interested parties (direct mailing, website)
- The Staff and Committee will conduct a public input session regarding recommended changes to the Rental Housing Code
- The City Council and Committee will participate in a Round Table discussion to review proposed recommendations.
- The recommended changes to the Rental Housing Code will be referred to the City Attorney to draft the appropriate code language.
- The Council will vote to approve recommended changes

CITY COUNCIL INPUT

Before moving forward with any further work by the Committee, it is important to make sure the Council is in support of the direction that the Committee's deliberations are heading.