



To: Mayor and City Council

From: Dylan Mulfinger

Subject: Community Development

Date: 3/14/2022

The City Administrator is asking council to reconsider their stance on contracting out rental inspection and allow the City Administrator to hire personnel and bring the program back to its successful levels as shown in 2019. Current landlords who have not been inspected have only benefited from the delays not caused by the city. The program was put in place so that the city could go through each rental then evaluate the program after this was complete. Stopping in the last third of the program will not help council reach its goals. The goal was to ensure safe housing in Oelwein. Rushing to finish the initial inspections will not provide a product that is expected from the community. The reason we are here is because of the community wanting improved housing. Landlords are not being double taxed, because they are paying a rental permit, not a rental inspection. I must reiterate that landlords only benefit from delayed inspections. This program was brand new in 2019 and stayed on track until the pandemic in 2020. The City Administrator can rebuild the department and finish the initial inspections and move forward with council to make change in for the 2023 year. Resistance to the rental inspection program is from individuals who do not want improved housing in Oelwein.



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As of March 2022

702 total units

526 initial inspections in 25 months

74 percent of units received initial inspection

In a pandemic free three-year period, the city needs to inspect 234 units annually. This is 20 units per month.

The current schedule allows for the rental inspection program to be at 61 percent complete. The city is head of this by 14 percent.

Saying that Community Development is behind is inaccurate. Community Development is ahead of schedule.

2019 – 7 active rental inspection months

January 2, 2019 – Building official start date.

Feb. 4, 2019 – Admin assistant start date.

March 15, 2019 – First rental inspection.

Total 2019 inspections: 387

First inspections: 255

Second & beyond inspections: 132

2020 – 4 active rental inspection months

March 16, 2020 – COVID lockdown.

July 10, 2020 – Mega lock down, work from home.

July 23, 2020 – Return to office.

September 15, 2020 – Rental inspections resume.

November 16, 2020 – Inspections stop again due to spike in COVID cases.



Total 2020 inspections: 198

First inspections: 121

Second & beyond inspections: 77

2021 – 11 ½ active rental inspection months (lost an employee)

Feb 10, 2021 – Inspections resume.

August 3, 2021 – Down one employee. Those permit and rental inspections stop.

September 21, 2021 – Part-time building inspector (Tuesday/Thursday) start date only doing permit inspections.

October 4, 2021 – Code enforcement officer start date.

October 26, 2021 – New full-time building inspector start date (only shadowed several rental inspections, studied for certification).

December 16, 2021 – New building inspector resigns.

Total 2021 inspections: 262

First inspections: 121

Second & beyond inspections: 141

2022 – 3 active rental inspection months

February 10, 2022 – Begin training part-time inspector to do rental inspections

February 22, 2022 – Part-time inspector begins rental inspections

Total 2022 inspections so far: 42

First inspections: 29

Second & beyond inspections: 13

General notes as the City investigates private rental inspection services

City council's role is to tell the City Administrator to proceed or change course on contracting out rental inspections.

Timeline

March 14

- Walk Council through a rental inspection
- Discuss steps that if rentals fail, fail to register, change hands
- Discuss next steps and review code
 - What part of code does council have a problem with
 - What is the goal for the code change
- Work through what the contract will include
- Continue to set attainable goals for the City Administrator

March 28

- Finalize goals and direction from council

April 11

- Council votes to send out RFPs for inspection services
- Council finalizes code changes

April 25

- Council begins voting on code change

May 9

- Council evaluates RFPs and potentially interviews candidates

May 23

- Code changes are final
- Council votes on a contract

June 13

- Council receives timeline from contract company

June 27

- Hold

General notes as the City investigates private rental inspection services

Contract for Rental Inspection

Inspection Process

The company will:

- create their own website for Oelwein's rental inspection program
- create the ability for owners to register their properties online
- direct the property owner to then pay the city
- contact property owners by mail when their inspection takes place along with a two-week notice
- provide a rental inspection report to the property owner and schedule a second inspection if needed
- place all rental inspection reports on the company's website to be accessible by the property owner and the City of Oelwein.
- provide a monthly report to the city spelling out initial inspections, second inspections, no shows, and reschedules
- provide an annual report on the program to be presented by the company to council each June
- represent the city at all board of appeals meeting and provide all materials needed for the appeal

Administration

The company will:

- be licensed bonded and insured to a level that is sufficient for the city
- background checks on all employees that enter homes in Oelwein
- properly identify themselves with an id card that is always visible during an inspection and their vehicles must show a company name
- provide photos of employees to be posted on the city's website
- provide a written report on complaints made by landlords to the city with 72 hours of receiving them from the landlord or the city
- respond to a tenant complaint with 72 hours unless it is life threatening then it will be completed with 24 hours

The company will not:

- report any properties that are not registered
- will not pursue property owners who fail to register
- fine property owners who fail 2nd and third inspections
- placard unsafe structure properties
- write down any additional code enforcement issues with neighboring properties
- will not provide advice or recommendations on how to repair or meet current city code

General notes as the City investigates private rental inspection services

Issue 1

Contracted company creates their own website and their own database. If the contractor does not renew the contract, does the contractor give that info to the city? Will the city email the contractor every time they need a report on said address?

Issue 2

Will the contractor represent the city in court? If the contractor cannot represent the city in court will the city have to inspect the property.

Issue 3

The city is using funding from a position that did several tasks for Community Development and now only funding rental inspections.

Many, many, many more issues to come.

General notes as the City investigates private rental inspection services

The City uses the following codes:

- Chapter Five Code Enforcement Officer
 - Spells out the duties of the Code Enforcement Officer
 - This code needs updated
- Chapter Twelve Buildings
 - Adopts the most recent edition of the International Building Code
 - This is now 2021
 - A recently proposed bill in the Iowa House would require a statewide building code
 - Adopts the most recent edition of the International Residential Code
 - Adopts the most recent edition Uniform Plumbing Code
 - Adopts the most recent edition International Mechanical Code
 - Adopts the most recent edition National Electrical Code
 -
 - Contains the rental housing inspection program
- Chapter Twenty-Five
 - Adopts the International Housing Maintenance Code 2015
 - Should be revamped to adopt code and not spell out the code

General notes as the City investigates private rental inspection services

Future of the Department

Should council contract the rental inspections, the City will need to continue to have a viable department to ensure Community Development goals are met. The City budgeted for three positions in the general fund and one in economic development.

The City will have the following positions if inspections are contracted:

- Building Official/Zoning Administrator
- Code Enforcement Officer
- Administrative Assistant

This level of employees ensures that Community Development can continue to work toward one of council five goals: Continue to Expand Measures to Improve Housing.

Community Development will still work on the following:

- Building Inspections
- Stop Work Orders
- Contractor Requirements
- Water on Inspections
- Vacant Lot Management
- Sale of Vacant Lots
- Tear Down Administration
- Site Plan Review
- Planning and Zoning
- Board of Adjustment
- Monitor Residential Home Revolving Loan Program with Upper Explorerland
- Long Range Home Planning
- Nuisance Abatement
- Nuisance Abatement Court Cases
- Monitor Nuisance Abatement Clean Up
- Oversee Tax Abatement Program
- Investigate Junk Homes
- Start 657A junk home process with the City Attorney
- Help with Adjacent Property Owner Disputes
- Vacant Property Registration