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**To:** Mayor Nelson and Members of the City Council

**From:** Daniel R. Buchholtz, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer  
Jeff Baker, Building Official

**Date:** January 15, 2025

**Subject:** Authorize Recruitment of Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer

As you are aware, Walter Morris resigned from the Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer position effective January 3, 2025 to join the SBM Fire Department as a shift captain. The City Council requested that this position be added to the January 21, 2025 work session agenda for further discussion.

The City Council authorized a rental housing study in late 2020 which focused on improving the City's programs and policies for rental properties. The findings of the study were presented to the City Council at a work session on February 8, 2021. As a result of that study, the City Council adopted amendments to its Housing Maintenance Code (Ordinance 473), adopted a housing maintenance inspection policy and transitioned the code enforcement officer from part time to full time to implement these amendments. The increased cost for the code enforcement position was paid for through higher rental housing license fees. The amendments were approved at the May 3, 2021 meeting. The new full time Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer was approved at the September 7, 2021 meeting.

Since September 2021, the Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer position was responsible for the following achievements:

- Stronger rental license program to hold landlords accountable and ensure tenants have a quality place to live.
- 2017-2021 averaged 45 late rental registrations. 2022-2025 average is 5 late rental registrations.
- Commercial fire inspections have provided us with the opportunity to access every business within the city limits, preventing transient companies from operating and ensuring we stay updated on their current Conditional Use Permits (CUPs).
- Life Safety Classes for Senior Apartment Residents. Enhancing the quality of life for the City's most vulnerable population.

- Abatement of 8064 Garfield Street. Removing this property not only increased the property values of the neighboring lots but also eliminated a significant safety hazard for the adjacent residents.
- Enhanced enforcement efforts on the Lund properties (Villa Rosa, Villa Rosa 2, Fireside Apartments), which led to a change in ownership and significant improvements to living conditions for residents in 91 apartment units.
- Removal of an illegal home auto shop at 7770 Van Buren Street
- 616 Rosedale Road. Unsanitary living conditions. Two dogs were rescued by animal control, and the previous homeowner was able to relocate to a more suitable living environment.
- Auto Body and Auto Repair Shops. Historically, numerous complaints have portrayed our city as resembling a junkyard. Since 2022, however, Code Enforcement has received an average of only two complaints per year.

The Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer plays a critical role in enhancing public safety and maintaining the overall well-being of our community. This position ensures compliance with fire, property maintenance, nuisance and zoning codes, reducing risks to residents and businesses alike. By proactively identifying and addressing hazards such as fire code violations, unsafe structures, and overcrowded properties, this role helps prevent incidents that could result in injury, loss of life, or property damage. The presence of a dedicated professional focused on fire safety and code enforcement demonstrates our commitment to protecting our community from preventable dangers.

Beyond immediate safety, this position contributes to the long-term stability and vibrancy of our neighborhoods. A robust code enforcement program, coupled with fire inspections, preserves property values, supports economic development, and fosters community pride. By addressing issues such as blight, unkempt properties, and fire hazards, the Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer helps maintain a clean, orderly, and appealing environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. Their work encourages accountability among property owners and landlords, ensuring that all properties meet health, safety, and aesthetic standards.

Furthermore, this role enhances the efficiency of local government by proactively addressing potential problems before they escalate, reducing the burden on emergency services and other departments. It also builds trust between the community and the city, as residents see tangible efforts to prioritize their safety and quality of life. Investing in this position is an investment in the safety, health, and future prosperity of our community, making it a critical component of our public safety strategy.

Based on these reasons and the demonstrated success of our rental housing program, staff respectfully requests authority to recruit for a Fire Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Building Official Jeff Baker or City Administrator Daniel Buchholtz at 763-784-6491.