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TO: Eileen Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*
FROM: R. Eric Slagle, Director of Development Services
DATE: February 6, 2020
RE: Motion by C. Rourke - Req. City Mgr. Update Council Regarding Status Of The Neighborhood Enhancement Enforcement Directive.

This memorandum addresses the request from Councilor Rourke regarding the status of the NEED Program.

As the Council is aware, in FY2015, Development Services instituted the NEED Program, which targeted the landlords in the City with the highest incidence of complaints over all public safety departments. We instituted this program, recognizing that there was a direct correlation between safe, sanitary housing, and landlords that continually allow properties to deteriorate and potentially become a public safety hazard. Development Services set out to identify these landlords and sought to bring their properties up to code through proactive enforcement, zero tolerance, and an escalating schedule of fines. The goal was to provide a financial ‘stick’, to encourage these substandard landlords to bring their properties into compliance, and at the same time, offer a product that would entice the rental clientele to participate and help maintain a level of safe and sanitary conditions.

To bring these properties into compliance, Development Services sent notice to eight landlords in the City with the highest levels of repeat complaints, requiring them each to attend an individual meeting, in person, at City Hall. That meeting was attended by staff members from LFD, LPD, Development Services and the City Manager’s Office, and the landlords were confronted with the volume of complaints the City had received for their various properties, in paper form if available. We wished to impress upon the landlords the amount of time and energy that was spent on their properties, and to let them know that the City was adopting a zero tolerance policy towards their properties. Zero tolerance means that each verified complaint from these landlords’ properties would immediately result in a fine, and those fines would escalate upon subsequent violations. Following the initial meeting, we have conducted multiple joint inspections with LFD, LPD, and Development Services. Compliance is measured by the lack of outstanding violations at each property, along with up to date COI inspections, LFD inspections, and Rental Unit Permits.

We inspected 39 total problem properties owned by six different landlords. At least partially as a result of our compliance efforts, 21 of these properties were sold by the offending landlords in the following year. This has the dual effect of providing new, hopefully more responsible owners for the majority of these units, while reducing the burdens on the NEED landlords, allowing them to provide greater focus on the properties they retained.

Since the initial push made through the NEED program during FY2015 and FY2016, the program

has been dormant. We are in the process of rolling out a next phase of the NEED Program, targeting a larger group of properties. The Building Commissioner, David Fuller, and the Senior Health Inspector, Shawn Machado, have compiled a list of 83 properties that comprise a significant portion of our problem issues around the City. We have provided this list to the LPD and LFD for them to review to see if they too have complaint calls originating from these addresses. Once we have coordinated with our internal departments, we will arrange for meetings to occur with the owners of these properties, likely starting within the next 2 weeks. We will keep the Council informed of the results of these meetings, and whether or not the properties are brought into compliance.

ES

February 6, 2020