

## SUBSTANDARD LIVING CONDITIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE

MARCH 14, 2019

A meeting of the Substandard Living Conditions Special Committee was held on Thursday, March 14, 2019, at 7:01 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber.

Alderman Tom Lopez, Chair, presided.

Members of Committee present: Alderman Ernest A. Jette, Vice Chair  
Alderman-at-Large Brandon Michael Laws

Members not in Attendance: Alderman Jan Schmidt  
Alderman Linda Harriott-Gathright

Also in Attendance: Bill McKinney, Building Department Manager

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### Chairman Lopez

Alderwoman Gathright did inform me that there was a meeting she had in Concord she had to attend; it is possible that Alderman Schmidt is at the same meeting. Just for the record, everybody who is watching, I referred to Alderman Jette as the Clerk but he is performing the role of the Clerk, he is actually Vice Chair of the Committee. So, just out of respect for that.

### Alderman Jette

Mr. Chairman also present is Bill McKinney, Building Department Manager.

### DISCUSSION

Certificate of Occupancy Discussion with Bill McKinney, Building Department Manager

### Chairman Lopez

Thanks. Mr. McKinney do you want to come up and grab one of the empty seats here so we can have a discussion, please. So our only agenda item here is to discuss the Building Department and basically what its role is in making sure that buildings are constructed and safe for occupancy when we have the opportunity to prevent any future substandard living conditions.

Do you want to give a quick overview of your Department and how you implement that?

### Bill McKinney, Building Department Manager

I could. If you'd like I do have handouts.

### Chairman Lopez

Oh sure, thank you, I'm sure we can attach copies of those to the minutes as well.

### Mr. McKinney

The forms I do have in front of you are, some are generic to a point that they cover a majority of our projects in town understanding that this Committee focuses on residential and multi-family residential in particular. We work through a process in our Department starting from when a project

is first proposed to the City, it goes through the Planning Department, Zoning Department, we go through reviews with our, what we call our Technical Committee. And then once there is approvals by the Planning Board, that project is then turned over to the Department of Building Safety. And through that process we begin our process and you will see on your first sheet of the packet that I handed to you, is we begin with the preconstruction meeting. That preconstruction meeting is very well documented and we include in that construction meeting the general contractor, the construction site supervisor who will be in charge of the project who is going to be our primary contact, the architect and all of the sub-contractors that will be on the project. So your site contractor, electrical, mechanical, HVAC which is your heating and cooling, any of your air exchange systems, plumbing and then we also have fire stopping contractors on occasion.

In certain cases the fire stopping, which is an important component of the building is often done by the sub-contractors once they have gone through a training program by the product manufacturer. We also go through a series and explain to them that there is a series of inspections that have to be done by our Department in order to comply. Those inspections start out with soils, concrete inspections as far as the special instructions, structural, fire stopping again. On the back of that page we go through basically a lot of our processes that we want the contractors to know and understand for us. We require 24 hours' notice for any inspections; our Department prides itself in being able to deliver services within 24 hours if you call for an inspection.

Our inspection times are typically 9 to 3, Monday through Friday. There is an hour in the morning and an hour at the end of each day that the inspectors are available to meet with contractors and home owners in our office to help answer questions. The work hours for the City of Nashua, we explain this to them, we have an ordinance in the City, their work hours are Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and then Saturday and Sunday and Holidays, 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. depending upon the districts they are working in.

We explain to them that there are re-inspection fees for the City. If they call for an inspection and they are not ready for that inspection, they could be assessed a re-inspection fee. We tend to be not very heavy-handed on that, we like to give you know one strike or so for them and allow them to make a mistake but educate them. But if it is a continuous problem they will be assess re-inspection fees at \$75.00 per inspection. There is penalties for working without permits and we explain that to all of the contractors and sub-contractors that are in the project. If you are doing work without permits, you will be assessed an additional fee to your permits and you can be even further penalized if you continue to work without permits.

We go through work that is being done that is not according to the approved plan. Under our policies and under the Building Code, we go through a pretty strict review process and approve plans, they get stamped plans back from us that have our City Seal on it that says it is approved for construction and this is the plan we are going to follow. When contractors don't follow that plan and they decide that they are going to do something outside of that, they need to notify us first and provide us with those amended documents.

And then as we go through some of the other inspections we get into HVAC air balancing, which is an important component of making sure that the heating and ventilation and air conditioning systems are operating the way that they are designed per the approved plans. We have continual progress meetings with the contractors. We maintain inspection records both on the project and in our data base at the office and then we go through a rigorous process of final inspections and eventually we will issue a Certificate of Occupancy for the building.

#### Chairman Lopez

I guess I have a couple questions just before we get too far ahead because I know you have additional documents to go through. My first one is with the permits since it has been quite ubiquitous in the news and in public comment.

Are those captured and then used to do immediate reassessment of value or in the case of just building a new building is that more just to make sure that there is qualification to do the changes?

Mr. McKinney

No our permit information is shared with our Assessing Department. In fact of lieu of recent events we have actually done a comprehensive review of all of our processes and policies to make sure we are providing the most accurate information to the Assessing Department. So our permits are two-fold, one it is the permit that allows the contractor to move forward with work and perform that work to code; allows us entry on to a property because we cannot enter properties unless we have permits issues. And then again that information and that permit information is shared with our Assessing Department to help them with their evaluation of the properties.

Chairman Lopez

I appreciate your proactivity. My second question was what kind of variance from a plan like generally is acceptable versus unacceptable? I mean if somebody adjusted where duct work was being laid out by a couple inches or decided to use a different size versus somebody using completely different equipment or completely different set up, how much of a range are you able to give?

Mr. McKinney

If it would have an effect on the system as it was designed and approved and especially in any of this, plumbing, electrical, or HVAC; if it alters the way that that system was designed and intended to operate, then it needs to be re-proposed to our Department so that we can verify that it is going to comply with code before we allow them to continue. We have found over the years that preapproving of permits or plans and projects before they start work makes much more economical sense to the project and to the City because we don't have to try and generate or create that plan on the construction site. We are all familiar with how it is supposed to be done, we have reviewed the plans, we understand, the contractor understands and as long as they are following the plans, the process is very smooth.

Chairman Lopez

So it's not somebody taking a micrometer out and being picky, you intervene if there is a major flaw in the overall result?

Mr. McKinney

Exactly, if it is going to alter the design of the system, any of the systems, it is an important aspect that we would have to have resubmittal to our office. But if it is a matter of moving a heat register you know 6 or 8 inches to the left or the right, as long as it is still performing the way it was intended, that's fine; same with electrical, same with plumbing. If it is still performing to Code, we would be fine with that and slight alterations happen, not every day, but often enough on projects.

Chairman Lopez

So I just want to state for anybody who may be watching that this discussion should be taken in the context of the City, this is an important responsibility of the City. The Department is called Building Safety for a reason. We are not just the Government trying to make up rules, everybody is going to wear blue shirts on Tuesday, it is we are trying to make sure that the City isn't later on in an awkward position of having a building that becomes unsafe, a threat to residents or a large number of people that are displaced because a foreseeable accident happened; scenarios that could cost the City a lot more that could cost developers a lot more.

And could very, very badly impact the individual expecting the City to maintain a reasonable amount of propriety that is what we are talking about.

Mr. McKinney

Correct yes the Department of Building Safety I believe is an important partner in the process and I do mean that by partner. There's the Developer, there's the Contractors, there's the Department of Building Safety and eventually there are the occupants of that building. And all of those folks are partners in the process and our job is to make sure that the buildings are built to code so we are not causing excessive cost to a contractor or developer and we are not adversely affecting the occupants of the building.

Chairman Lopez

Before we continue with your presentation or discussion are there any other questions that the other members would want to ask?

Alderman Jette

I'm surprised to see the fire stopping listed under subcontractor's special inspections. When I think of fire stopping I think of pieces of wood behind a wall so that you don't have a complete air draft. I'm surprised obviously I don't understand it completely because I am surprised that there would be subcontractors who would be charged with doing that as opposed to just part of the general construction.

Mr. McKinney

Yes in residential, one and two family construction fire stopping or fire blocking which is it is called in the International Residential Code is just that, that wood plate that we would put it at the ceiling levels to stop the progression of fire. As we know in balloon framed buildings years ago that was what usually lost a lot of buildings. But fire stopping is an important component of commercial structures and multi-families. The systems nowadays are much more complicated; they are using intumescent fire stopping products; they are using fire blocking; they are using fire rated insulation, mineral wool is one of the trade names for that. So there is many, many systems that are out there. What the design of that is, is so that you are always protecting the escape path, the egress path for the occupants of the building. So any penetrations that would be going through a rated wall assembly or rated ceiling assembly so fire can't progress out of an apartment, there would be specific fire-rated systems. They are actually engineered systems now that we could have a book that thick, we could have a book that thick depending upon the project of the systems that were in there.

What we found over the years is that it is very difficult for the Department of Safety to keep our people trained on every system that comes out there because that particular field of construction is really advancing quite a bit. So we do require special inspections for fire stopping and there is actually companies that they go out and inspect and they do minimally destructive inspections and make sure that every hole in that building is sealed so that it stops the spread of fire and more importantly stops the spread of smoke. There have been plenty of studies that have come out and back in the 80's if you recall there was the MGM Grand Fire in Las Vegas where you know most of the people that died in that fire were far away from the fire in the building but they became deceased because of the smoke transmission through the building.

So fire stopping done properly stops the spread of the fire and it also seals off those holes and those penetrations to keep the smoke away from the occupants.

Thank you.

Mr. McKinney

You are very welcome.

Chairman Lopez

Would you like to continue?

Mr. McKinney

Sure. On our next sheet that we have here, now this is a packet that what I've given you is that we hand to each developer that comes to us when we have a preconstruction meeting and we go through this. We go through the process of what the plan requirements are for the Department and that could be whether it is a new building, whether it is an addition, if we are getting into what we call Interior Fit Up and the alterations are renovations. We also give them all the information of all the other City Departments that would be involved in that. And I do believe that I missed on our pre-construction meetings, we also include any of the other City agencies that would be involved in this project; they attend that meeting as well. I believe it is a very good meet and greet so that we can build a professional relationship right from the start so that the contractor, the subcontractors all know who they are working with on the project. It seems to work very well as far as having a very good open line of communication.

Beyond plan requirements, what happens from that process, once they bring us in the plans with all of the requirements met, we go into a plan review process where we review all the building plans to make sure they are going to comply with code, egress components, making sure that the structural reports are there, making sure that if they have fire stopping systems that they need to have designed in the building we have those designs. We also go through a review process of all plumbing, electrical and mechanical systems that are in the building. Those two will have separate plans.

As far as our required permits, you will see this is quite an extensive list. But the most common permits that you are going to have is we have our combination land use building permit. That is for all new construction, additions, tenant fit up, change of use or occupancies and all the reasons you would need a permit are listed there. Driveway permits which are listed by the Department of Public Works, electrical permits, gas piping permits, mechanical permits, plumbing permits, those are the standard permits that you would have on any new residential multi family dwelling.

And then we have our list of inspections and our inspections start right out from the get go is most times they open up a temporary electrical service, which our Department will check to make sure that it complies with code and is safe for anyone using that. We have rough electrical inspections, there are frame inspections, there is rough plumbing, rough mechanical, our roof frame is always done prior to insulation being done. We have insulation inspections and then we also move into, after that, after all of those inspections are passed and approved, we allow them to move into the final phases. That is after your drywall is up, we get into our final electrical, final plumbing, mechanical and building. As we go through those inspections we are also communicating with all the other Departments that are involved in this project: Planning, Department of Public Works, The Fire Marshall's Office and we are trying to determine where they are in their inspectional process. So all of those Departments also have to approve through our data base that all the work meets their standards as well.

When the process is followed it is pretty smooth and seamless. But if we have someone that decides to venture outside of that process it really puts a kink into it and we try and through our

preconstruction meeting we try as hard as we can to really stress to them – follow the process and it will be really smooth.

So as we get into all the other approvals of agencies, sometimes a project won't be completed on the outside, some of the site work can't be done – the final paving can't be done that we would like to see due to weather conditions, times of year. So there is a process that the contractor can bond that work. That still allows our Department to issue Certificates of Occupancy for the building. And as we go through the Certificate of Occupancy, after all the inspections are completed by our Department and any of the other agencies involved in that project whether it is DPW, Fire, Planning, Zoning, when all of those are passed we can start issuing Certificates of Occupancy.

It is not uncommon for our Department to do phased Certificates of Occupancy. Often in apartment buildings or condominium type projects, we will issue Certificates of Occupancy per floor, you know, as they bring them on to that final finish. And by final finish I mean the floors, 3 and 4 could be completely done but they are still doing carpeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. As long as the egress components are complete and all the fire alarm systems, and fire protection systems are in place, we will allow them to start gradually occupying that building by temporary certificates of occupancy and then when all the work is done issue them a final Certificate of Occupancy for the building.

Chairman Lopez

We've had a number of large building projects in the past 2 or 3 years that Loft 77 I think it is, I forgot their number.

Mr. McKinney

Loft 34.

Chairman Lopez

And the Renaissance Building and the Marshall Street Building – do they generally, like when a project is being built of that scope, I would imagine that the owners are trying to like generate revenue immediately when they are able. Do they generally pre-book the rooms, the space or the apartments? Pre lease them?

Mr. McKinney

It's not uncommon for them to start having lease agreements based upon communications through our Department as we all understand where they are in the inspection process. And it does, again, it becomes a very good partnership, where we know where we are in this inspection process, we help to guide them, we help to let them know – “hey you might be missing an inspection from Public Works that you are going to need before we can start issuing”. So through that communication yes, it's not uncommon for those developers or those owners of those properties to actually start pre-booking in anticipation of a move in date

Chairman Lopez

So you have to be very discerning when you are doing your final inspection because you know people are coming in, you know that there is that anticipation and the people are basically impacting their own housing agreements to do that, because no one just manifests themselves when it is time to move into a place they are living somewhere already. They might be living with family or friends or something like that but they also might be renting at another location. If they are expecting to move in at a certain date, they may communicate that they are planning to move out at the place that they are at. So I can imagine that you wouldn't lightly just – “Uh this one isn't quite good enough – it can't be occupied right now”. You have a very careful procedure for that.

Mr. McKinney

We do and we don't take delays and occupancy of buildings lightly. If we've been forced into a position where we would need to delay the occupancy it is because the building doesn't meet the minimum code requirements for life safety. Health is another one that would prevent that, if ventilation equipment is not installed, not operating the way it should, then again that's a problem. If you are not exchanging the air properly in a building you can end up with a sick building pretty fast. So there's and obviously if it not exchanging air correctly it is not heating and cooling correctly. So you are impacting the occupants of the building as far as the costs that it may be adding up to them as far as being able to heat their unit. So there's a lot to it when the minimum code requirements are there. And we don't take it lightly, we believe through the good communication process and through our inspection process that we are pretty good about meeting all deadlines. But occasionally there's a communication breakdown or a process breakdown and on the contractor or developer side that ends up where we are in a position that we have to delay the Certificate of Occupancy.

Chairman Lopez

And on the City's side nobody wins with an empty building like we are no collecting taxes, there is no revenue coming in, its value isn't increasing. The overall housing stock has been an area of great concern over the past year because there wasn't enough of it. I know particular the Mayor has been very aggressive in terms of like we need to make it a priority to bring in new housing stock and new opportunities for people to live because people don't have places they can move to. Prices are going up and that also puts pressure on your Department. I have seen in the past few years because we get concerns about substandard living conditions or structural issues or roofs that are leaking or that kind of stuff, you are doing your best to make sure that building is safe, but those building owners are being given expectations that can be reasonably met.

Mr. McKinney

Absolutely and again through our preconstruction process and meeting process I think all of our expectations are very clear. One of the biggest messages we try and get is a good communication is really how we get through the process and we meet deadlines. If something happens on a project that needs to change, if they are communicating with them, we will work with them in any way we can so they can still meet their deadlines. It is when we have the breakdown in communication, and we are not involved in that process and we find out about it at the end of the project, that's where we start getting into delays.

Chairman Lopez

And the breakdown on communication isn't always with – I mean there are several parties involved here, there is the building owner, there's probably a building operator, but there are also mentioned here a number of contractors and sub-contractors and they are all working in concert. I cannot imagine how upset a building owner would be if a contractor dropped a ball on a major part of the building.

Mr. McKinney

Pretty upset occasionally.

Chairman Lopez

Do other members of the Board have questions or discussion?

Alderman Jette

From dealing with your Department on other issues I've been told that your Department and other Departments are largely complaint driven. We don't have the ability to police things, we kind of depend on the public to inform us of problems and then we react to those complaints. In this process of course you are more proactive you are involved right from the beginning. But when it gets to the point where the building is complete and like Alderman Lopez said the tenant has given notice at another place and he wants to move into the new place and for whatever a reason a Certificate of Occupancy is not granted, what do you do to prevent people from moving in. If a tenant has no place else to go and he moves in, he's probably not going to complain to you that there is no Certificate of Occupancy because then I suppose he'd had to leave. What enforcement procedure do you go through to keep people from moving into a building that has not received a Certificate of Occupancy?

Mr. McKinney

We rarely run into that occurrence.

Alderman Jette

Oh good.

Mr. McKinney

Thankfully most people tend to play by the rules when we say "you can't move into the building" they do tend to listen. In the off chance that we would run into that, we do have processes in place. If they are in a building that does not have a Certificate of Occupancy, they are in violation of State Law and they are in violation of the Building Code. They can be removed by the Police at that point because it is trespassing. There's also a ticketing process that we do have in the City that we are very happy that the Aldermen supported that process that we do have the ability to issue citations and fines.

In extreme cases, it would mean bringing a developer, because you know someone had to authorize them to move into the building, it would mean bringing the developer to court. But thankfully I can think of a few times when we've ever even reached the level of having to suggest that was the way we were going to go. Most of our developers are very good about complying and understand the process and the need to have a Certificate of Occupancy before anybody moves into their buildings. I feel we have a very good professional and working relationship with the majority of our developers in the City; they are very professional and you know as much as you hear that the codes are a nuisance, they all understand the process. And I think they understand that we do our best to work with them because we understand that you know time is money when you are working in this industry.

I don't think – I know of too many industries that that's really true, so we do our best not to tie up projects or slow down the occupancy of buildings.

Alderman Jette

Of course not all construction projects are done by the developers with which you have a good working relationship, a lot of them are done by homeowners themselves, less aware of all of the requirements and more apt to try to occupy a building without a proper Certificate of Occupancy. But in those cases you feel you have the tools you need to deal that.

Mr. McKinney

We do and in those rare occasions when that does happen, we change from what I like to say is our role of enforcers or administrators to educators. And homeowners often don't understand all the processes that are involved; the permitting process, the inspection process. And I think it is our job, when we find those, to educate the folks, you know the homeowner or you know the tenant, whatever it may be, what the process is. So our job has many different hats that we wear and like I say we move from administrators of codes to enforcers of codes and then again we also have to be educators of codes.

Chairman Lopez

I think it's fair to say that by and large your Department does an excellent job because we are the Committee that is the go-to place when something is substandard when people are not able to have a reasonable quality of life. We are not up to our eyeballs in buildings that are failing code or uncopyable. There are a lot of buildings in Nashua and it seems like most of them are being maintained and the owners are using the Departments as a resource. If any private home owners might be watching this or planning renovations, I would encourage you to check with the Building Department because this is not written in like "legalese" it is not overly complicated or convoluted, it explains exactly what it is, it lays out steps. I am under the impression that the Building Department is a great resource for problem solving.

Mr. McKinney

We try to be and all of our information that you have, you know we have information for residential dwellings, you know one and two family for the homeowners. As you can see, you were given black and white copies to save cost, but we do have all of ours are color-coded to help you understand what the differences are. We have those in place for commercial construction, multi-family, we also have them for single and one and two family and all of our information is available on our web site. So homeowners, if they are looking for that information, it is there, it is free, they can print it off, they can read it and we are very open to providing any information that we can. If they want information and they can't find it, they can always e-mail our Department and we'll send it to them.

Chairman Lopez

Well I appreciate the frugality, our Board was obsessed with golden rod for the longest reason so this gives a great understanding of what your Department does. It seems very straight forward and understandable and I appreciate all the work that you are doing.

Mr. McKinney

I thank you and I thank you for the compliments on our Department. I think it is important to stress that our Department on the Building Safety Side works on all of our new buildings, renovations, alterations where you need permits. But we also work very closely with our Code Enforcement Department. It does an excellent job in administering the housing regulations for the City as well as does our Fire Marshall's office and Health. Those four Departments work very closely together and we do our best to make sure that you aren't inundated with housing complaints at this Committee, because you know we take pride in making sure that the City is safe and we are providing good housing to the people of Nashua.

Chairman Lopez

I can think of any number of examples over the years where we have had what could have been a bad situation that didn't, it wasn't anywhere near as bad. There was a fire in the Tree Streets a couple of years ago in a multi-unit apartment building and probably due to the fire stopping the

whole building didn't go up before people were able to get out.

We didn't have people passing out from smoke inhalation and all that kind of stuff. Accidents happen; fires happen – we don't want to think about it, but if your Department is thinking about it and helping make sure there are strategies and resources for builders then we are prepared for those kinds of eventualities.

Mr. McKinney

Correct and when we do have those buildings that do have those events such as fires and everything, we have been very, I don't want to stay "lucky" but I would say privileged that we have property owners that work with our Department and understand that building may not meet current code now, but they will work with us to make sure that that building is as close to current code as we can get it as we go through the re-build process. And a particular example of that was West Hollis Street a few years ago where two buildings were impacted and the property owner worked very well with our Department and you have a very safe couple of buildings there now with sprinkler systems, with fire alarm systems. So you know, brought up to the latest codes that you could and that was an excellent, again, I'll use the word partnership with the City and the property owner doing what we could to provide safe housing in the City of Nashua

Chairman Lopez

And I was using fire as a dramatic example but there's plenty of others. I mean if the heating isn't working in the winter people are at risk of any number of illnesses, they could literally have hypothermia if the heating is out during any of these major cold spells. And during the summer air conditioning is not a luxury when it is 100 degrees out and you have elderly people. They need air flow, they need the ability to keep themselves cool. It needs to be safe

Mr. McKinney

Correct, yes it does.

Alderman Laws

I think it has been answered but another thing I was curious about but you alluded to builders getting frustrated with code sometimes. I was just wondering about the process, is there an audit process for the existing codes because I mean like for instance, I am completely ignorant of the subject, asbestos used to be used widely in building, right. So they eventually get rid of asbestos because they realize it is poisonous. Is there a process where they are looking at all the existing codes and making sure that they are up to date and that there aren't some codes that are unnecessarily burdensome to contractors or expensive that are not necessarily producing any kind of safety advantage for the residents or occupants of these buildings?

Mr. McKinney

The State of New Hampshire has a very good process and what we do through the City of Nashua is we do our best to stay in line with the State of New Hampshire Codes, because we feel a uniform code across the State is best for all. Whether it is the residents, whether it is the businesses, but it helps promote a good economy as well if you can go from one part of the State, the southern part to the northern part and understand that the code is very similar. So we try not to have a lot of localized amendments to that code. Currently the codes are being reviewed and hopefully adopted this year at the State level to bring us in line with the 2015 codes but while that happens the Building Code Review Board which is appointed by the State is already reviewing the next level of codes, which would be the 2018 codes in anticipation of putting them in place for 2021.

The way that the codes work it is really good to be, what we would say is one cycle behind. You don't want the absolute latest and greatest, let everybody else figure out what the problems are with

that code and nuances with that code. But if we can stay at least one code cycle behind the State and the City of Nashua continues with our progress of staying with what the State adopts we are going to be in pretty good shape.

As far as answering your question on do the codes advance and start to recognize those problems? Absolutely. That is really what the codes are about. Codes are developed and amended every 3 years nationally. An amended code edition comes out and what that amended code does is recognize the latest disasters; the latest technology in the building industry. So it is important to stay up-to-date with the codes just for that reason.

#### Alderman Laws

Thank you. May I follow up, thank you Chairman. I'd also like to parrot what Alderman Lopez was saying, I think it is great that you took it upon yourself to do kind of a loose self-audit to make sure that everything was going well. I appreciate that every much. So thank you.

#### Mr. McKinney

You're very welcome.

#### Chairman Lopez

Well thank you for joining us tonight, we definitely appreciate you taking your time, oh Alderman Jette you have a question?

#### Alderman Jette

I grew up in a family where the fathers did everything, you know, they repaired everything, they hardly ever called any professional to come in and do anything. I suspect that there are people like that still out there.

#### Mr. McKinney

Oh absolutely.

#### Alderman Jette

Could you, maybe this would be a good opportunity to just kind of briefly summarize what kind of things people, you know, at what point do they need to get permits where they can't just do something themselves without getting a permit? Is there an easy breaking point or is the answer always to call first and find out whether you need a permit?

#### Mr. McKinney

My easy answer is it is always best to call us or e-mail us. We love to answer questions, again, that's the role as the educator. Because people don't know all the requirements; but to simplify it, if you are doing anything in a home that affects the structure or any of the escape paths in a home, then a permit is typically required. So if you are adding a deck, if you are taking out a window and changing it into a door and putting in a sliding door where a window used to be, those are going to require a permit. Those are structural changes to a building.

Electrically, if you are adding circuits to a home that requires that you are actually going to go out and buy a box of wire and you are going to start running wire through your house, that requires permits. If you are changing a light fixture, changing light bulbs, no permits on that. On plumbing, very similar to electrical, if you are adding or altering a plumbing system in any manner, then that does require permits.

So if you are altering or installing gas piping, believe it or not in the State of New Hampshire a homeowner can install his own gas piping, but it has to be installed with permits and it has to be inspected by our Department to make sure it is safe.

It is often where our inspectors spend time on a homeowner's project trying to educate them on you know not everybody is a plumber. And you know I think plumbing is probably one of the most difficult codes to understand and so we often find that our plumbing inspector spends an awful lot of time with homeowners trying to educate them on the proper use of fittings, how to properly vent a plumbing system. All of our inspectors are very good about doing that for our homeowners because again that's who we work for.

Alderman Jette

Thank you.

Chairman Lopez

Thank you for your time and thank you for coming here to answer these questions. And again I encourage the public to reach out to the Building Department if you have any plans for renovations. If you are hanging a picture, probably not; but if you are planning on moving a wall or subdividing your living room or trying to make an apartment in the attic, then talk to the Building Department and make sure you are doing everything within code.

Personally I hadn't really thought about the fire stoppage but now that I think about it, it seems like something that somebody could easily accidentally do where they just – "OH I'm just going to put a wall here, I'm going to open this doorway up" or whatever and the actions you are taking could have implications in an emergency that you don't foresee.

Mr. McKinney

Absolutely.

Chairman Lopez

Ok so that concludes that. Are there are any other topics that the Board or the Committee is interested in addressing.

Alderman Jette

I have nothing.

Chairman Lopez

So I will just comment in terms of my Chairing style, I recognize the limitations of my vision so when we are discussing with members of the public, as long as there is an exchange moving forward, I don't necessarily feel like I have to approve every single one. I know that is a slight break from other more regimented groups but it is basically because I won't be able to tell that you are waving your hand and there will be just a delay. So hopefully there is little bit more tolerance on the Committee on that side and I just wanted to make that clear.

PUBLIC COMMENT – None.

REMARKS BY ALDERMEN

Alderman Laws

I was just going to say Happy St. Paddy's Day to you guys I hope you get to enjoy it. And happy St. Joseph's Day.

ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION BY ALDERMAN LAWS TO ADJOURN  
MOTION CARRIED**

The meeting was declared closed at 7:47 p.m.

Alderman Ernest Jette  
Committee Clerk, Pro tem