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Rental unit inspection fee gets chilly reception

Council expected to vote on proposal Monday

BY BOB PETRIE • SHEBOYGAN PRESS STAFF • DECEMBER 15, 2009

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A city proposal to create a fee-based annual inspection of Sheboygan's 9,000 residential rental units got a frosty reception from several area landlords Monday night during the Common Council's [Finance](#) Committee.

The fees, under the proposal, would be \$120 for a three-year period, payable in installments of \$40 per year.

There would be a cap of fees on multifamily buildings with more than eight units of \$320 per year, per building. Inspections would ensure the properties meet basic livability requirements.

Some landlords attending said the fees would be an undue hardship on them in a down economy with high rental vacancy rates.

"The rental market is depressed right now," said John Kittelson, president of the Lakeshore Apartment Association. "Many people said you can pass that money onto your renters. You can't pass it onto your renters."

Jason Dierkes, an attorney representing landlord Toby Watson of South Pier LLC, warned that if the council approves the fees, it would discriminate against rental owners.

"If the city passes the ordinance as is, we're going to challenge it the next day. That's expensive," Dierkes said.

City officials say the fee could raise about \$240,000 a year, money that could be used to pay to retain three building inspectors whose jobs are being targeted due to a budget cut.

"We need to take our neighborhoods back and we need to start taking pride in our neighborhoods," Mayor Bob Ryan said during the [meeting](#). "Can we do it with less building inspectors? I don't think we can. But is this the solution? That's why we're here to discuss it."

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Ald. Jim Gischia, committee chairman, questioned why the inspection program is moving ahead now with the inspection layoffs looming.

"I've heard this from a lot of people, so I'm going to say, 'Three jobs are on the line. This proposal kind of fixes that.' The timing is kind of curious," Gischia said.

Currently, city inspectors are authorized to enter rental properties for inspections only when there are major outside building violations, or if a tenant complains to the city about the condition of the rental unit, and there are no city fees involved in the inspections.

"We have tenants that call us and say, 'I don't want to complain to my landlord because I'm afraid of being evicted,'" said Paulette Enders, city development director.

The proposal will get a second public hearing Wednesday during the council's Public Protection and Safety Committee. The meeting is at 5 p.m. in the lower level [conference](#) room at City Hall.

The full council is expected to vote on whether to approve the program next Monday night.


A few landlords said they run clean operations, and that the city needs to go after several out-of-town rental property owners who don't keep their places up.

"We live here, us landlords. Don't beat us up," said Anthony Weyker, who owns about 60 rental condos in the city.

Reach Bob Petrie at bpetrie@sheboygan-press.com and 453-5129.

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bizaro wrote:

Replying to ditto_Guy:

I know a person who lives in a rental property (house) that looks fine on the outside, but the house is not insulated well, and she gets drafts through her windows all the time. When I go to her house I need to keep my jacket on it is all ways so cool in her home. So yes I feel all older homes that are rentals should be inspected. It is not fair for people to have to live in conditions like that, and have the landlord not care. Many of the lower rental homes are old, cold and drafty and it should not fall back on the renters. Yes take care and inspect these homes.

You obviously are missing the point. If your friend has a legitimate problem she already has someone she can call paid for by us, the taxpayers. And despite what some have said, this new cost will be passed on to the renter. My house is older. I

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