

Sprinkler Ordinance Committee Meeting 11/20/17

Present: Councilors Anne Watson, Rosie Krueger and Jean Olson

City Staff: Robert Gowans, Chris Lumbra and Sue Allen

Meeting called to order; minutes approved.

Councilor Krueger initially raised concerns about the City providing property tax breaks for sprinkler installation to commercial businesses required by the State to install a sprinkler system. Chief Gowans noted that there is a \$2,500 cap on any sprinkler-related tax break, and Krueger withdrew her concern.

Chris Lumbra said he objected to 'changes of use' for downtown commercial buildings are limited to mercantile. So, for example, a store that becomes a restaurant is still considered mercantile, and not required to put in a sprinkler system.

Krueger said there is concern by a majority on the council about requiring new, single-family homes to install sprinklers. She suggested for discussion removing the sprinkler ordinance and creating a Fire Protection District in downtown, and possibly high density areas like Barre Street, focused on high risk areas. Councilor Watson suggested using the zoning districts of C1 and C2 to outline the Fire Protection District.

Gowans said he could support creation of the district, but is opposed to removing requirement for single family homes. He suggested raising the incentive. Krueger asked him to try to determine how much money the City has saved (through fewer fires/firefighters) since the ordinance was implemented.

Krueger said the sprinkler requirement on single family homes is out of line with the rest of the state. She also said it can be very expensive for home buyers, up to \$10,000 or more.

Lumbra said new homes could be required to use fire-retardant materials, such as densely packed cellulose in the walls. That would require more of his time to conduct inspections.

If the ordinance is maintained, the Councilors agreed to approve the staff recommended variance changes aimed at free-standing, small houses of 1,000 square feet or less: single level living area, proper fire and carbon monoxide detectors, meeting all other building code requirements. The same requirements would be included in a variance for new apartments added to existing family homes. A variance was also added for trailer-mounted tiny houses.

Krueger said she was less certain about eliminating the ordinance for single family housing that is part of a development project. Lumbra noted that developers could probably buy sprinkler systems at a cheaper rate.

Councilors asked staff to prepare two options:

1. Repeal the ordinance and create a Fire Protection District.
2. Keep the ordinance, with the variances outlined above, as well as single family homes that meet certain fire-safe standards (cellulose insulation, any others?).

Krueger also asked Lumbra to factor his time into each option.

Next meeting scheduled for Dec. 4 at 4:45 p.m. in City Hall.

Meeting adjourned.