

**NORTH RIDGEVILLE CITY COUNCIL
BUILDING AND LANDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 6:30 P.M.
TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2024**

To Order and Pledge of Allegiance:

Chairman Clifford Winkel called the Building and Lands Committee meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Members present: Chairman Clifford Winkel, Councilman Bruce Abens, and Councilwoman Holly Swenk.

Also present: Councilman Eric Shaffer, President Jason Jacobs, Councilman Martin DeVries, Mayor Kevin Corcoran, Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber, and Assistant Clerk of Council Fijabi Gallam.

Action on Minutes:

Chairman Winkel asked if there were any corrections to the minutes dated October 16, 2023. No discussion was offered. The minutes stand approved as submitted.

Discussion regarding 2024-13:

2024-13 AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 1480 AND CHAPTER 660 AND REPEALING CHAPTER 1476 AND CHAPTER 650 OF THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CODIFIED ORDINANCES TO MAKE IMPROVEMENTS AND CLARIFICATIONS TO REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPERTY MAINTENANCE.
(Introduced by Mayor Corcoran; Formerly known as T 148-2023 for First Reading on 12-18-2023; Building and Lands Committee Meeting on 1-16-2024)

Chair Winkel stated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss 2024-13, a specific legislative matter. He asked the Planning and Development Director to provide a summary for Ordinance Number 2024-13.

Planning and Development Director Kim Lieber provided a summary of the following:

- The codes were revitalized and rejuvenated. The ordinances were brought up to date and improved. Internal procedures, policies, and templates were developed for staff to use. Staff members were hired and trained. Community education was provided to inform residents about the requirements and promote compliance through education rather than citations.
- Issues were identified in the property maintenance program of the Building Department.
- Since May 2023, Mrs. Lieber has been meeting with the Chief Building Official, Police Chief, Fire Chief Mayor, and Law Department.
- While the legislation is not flawless and does not completely resolve all conflicts in the code, it does address some of the current issues and provides necessary corrections.
- One of the chapters being repealed is Chapter 1476, which was adopted in 1966 and regulated unsafe buildings in the city.
- Chapter 1480, which was adopted in 2004, is based on the International Property Maintenance Code.

- There was a conflict between Chapter 1476 and Chapter 1480, as they both aimed to govern unsafe buildings but had different procedures.
- Examples of confusion in the code and conflicts from referencing the Ohio Revised Code were presented by Mrs. Lieber.
- Chapter 650, which was adopted in 1974, is being repealed due to its conflicts with other chapters, causing confusion.
- Mrs. Lieber stated that it was unnecessary to reference the Ohio Revised Code separately, as the police officers had the authority to cite under either the ORC or the local code.
- The goal was to remove code language that was redundant and conflicting, while also keeping Chapters 1480 and 660 intact.
- Standardizing the appeal notice requirements.
- Created more specific standards when needed to reduce subjectivity.
- The violation for high grass will be reduced from exceeding eight inches to exceeding 12 inches.
- Hardship policy implementation.

Chair Winkel inquired if any Committee Members had any questions or comments.

Councilwoman Swenk inquired if the inspectors would recommend a resident for a CHIP grant if they require major repairs.

Mrs. Lieber clarified that the inspectors typically do not enter people's homes as the property maintenance program primarily focuses on exterior property upkeep. However, if there are reasonable suspicions of a hazardous condition inside someone's home that could potentially endanger lives, staff members may request permission to enter. Alternatively, if permission is not granted, they have the option to obtain an administrative search warrant through the court.

Mrs. Lieber further mentioned that they are actively seeking community education initiatives to inform property owners about available resources and provide landlord-tenant information. The City is involved in the CHIP program to offer assistance to residents, particularly those with low incomes.

Councilman Abens wanted to know the plans for the notification process that is dictated by the State of Ohio.

Mrs. Lieber provided clarification on how the notification process for property maintenance is determined at the local level. She stated that the department utilizes multiple forms of communication to notify property owners, and if these notifications are ignored, the Law Department would intervene to address any outstanding issues. Additionally, the Building Department can post notices on the properties.

Chair Winkel inquired if the intention of the legislation was to modify the code in accordance with the changes in the Ohio Revised Code.

In response, Mrs. Lieber mentioned the importance of maintaining updated references to the Ohio Revised Code in conjunction with the local code. She noted that the Police Officers are authorized to cite violations under both codes, making it unnecessary to duplicate the Ohio Revised Code.

Chair Winkel noted that certain areas of the city cannot be mowed due to excessive rainfall and the grass is sometimes over 13 inches tall. He recommended utilizing the Fair Housing Board to assist with communication and address concerns.

Chair Winkel inquired if any members of the Administration or Committee Members had any questions or comments.

Councilman Abens pointed out that Cleveland Heights serves as a good example when it comes to managing grass and natural landscaping within a city. He inquired whether the city would be accommodating natural landscaping, such as tall prairie grass that reaches three feet in height.

Mrs. Lieber mentioned that while the code does address cultivated lawns and weeds, it does not specifically address ornamental beds. The concerns lie more in the realm of health and safety rather than appearance.

Councilman Abens emphasized the significance of having a strong code.

Councilman Jacobs inquired about the sections that were eliminated from Chapter 660 in the newer version of the ordinance and whether they are addressed elsewhere in the code or Ohio Revised Code.

Mrs. Lieber explained the elimination, stating that it was necessary due to the duplications found in the Ohio Revised Code.

Councilman Jacobs requested an explanation for the inclusion of a section on Unauthorized Use of South Central Park Lake - Chapter 660.21.

Mrs. Lieber advised that it was recommended to retain the requirement in the code due to the area being a nuisance in the past.

Councilman Shaffer raised concerns regarding the height requirement for tall grass, urging the administration to reevaluate the current limit of 8 inches. He also requested clarification on how the hardship policy would be defined.

Mrs. Lieber mentioned that the hardship definition would consider factors such as weather conditions and construction challenges.

Moved by Abens and seconded by Swenk to approve Ordinance Number 2024-13 and send to City Council for consideration as submitted.

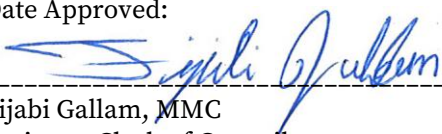
A voice vote was taken and the motion carried.

Yes – 3 No – 0

Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Date Approved:



Fijabi Gallam, MMC
Assistant Clerk of Council