



Legislation Text

File #: 21-507, **Version:** 1

City Council Meeting Date: September 7, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: Mitzi A Baker, Community Development
Alissa Harrington, City Attorney

Review of Proposed Ordinance Amendments Related to the Residential Rental Licensing Code and Nuisance Code.

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council will hear a presentation on updates to City Codes related to Rental Licensing, Nuisances and Enforcement.

Summary Report:

Rental properties are licensed by the City and are inspected for compliance with codes to ensure basic standards of safety and living to protect occupants. Northfield currently has approximately 626 rental properties and 2,343 rental units.

In 2019, it was determined that policies related to the Rental program warranted review and updating to include modern language, current best practices, and more structure to manage non-compliant properties. Hiring a consultant to carry out the bulk of this work was identified as a need, and the HRA Board sponsored funds to assist with consultant services.

Early in the project, WSB and Associates was hired and engaged local stakeholders to understand what has worked well with the program, where changes may be warranted and to identify best practices to incorporate. WSB completed surveys of rental tenants as well as property owners/managers, and also interviewed groups with insight on renter concerns/issues. They researched best practices, drawing from other MN community examples, and identified program and policy changes to consider; reviewed fee structures and administrative tools to inform Northfield; and will provide some final tools for staff use after policies are amended.

After engaging the City Attorney in reviewing work completed by WSB, additional sections of Code were identified as needing to be addressed in order to provide the structure necessary to strengthen the Rental program. At that time it became apparent that writing/re-writing City Code would require additional effort and involvement from the City's Legal team. The City's legal advisor, Flaherty & Hood, P.A., was then assigned the lead to prepare Code changes.

In addition to the Rental code, changes to Nuisance and Citation/Enforcement language were identified as needing to be addressed.

Ms. Harrington, Attorney with Flaherty & Hood, prepared a report detailing the proposed changes and will present this information to the Council. She will also identify areas where policy direction will be needed from Council in order to complete drafting proposed code changes. A copy of the report and presentation are attached.

Alternative Options:

N/A

Financial Impacts:

Code changes may be accompanied by a proposal to update fees.

Tentative Timelines:

After the proposed Code changes are drafted and ready for review, staff anticipates sharing the information with key stakeholders before Council considers formal action. Staff expects to have the Ordinance changes completed by late Fall with Code and program updates ready for implementation by January 2022.