

**BOROUGH OF NORTHAMPTON
SPECIAL PUBLIC HEARING
PROPOSED ORDINANCE FOR RENTAL UNIT INSPECTION
May 2, 2018**

CALL TO ORDER: A Special Public Hearing of the Northampton Borough Council was called to order by President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. at 6:30 PM on Wednesday, May 2, 2018. The meeting was held in Borough Council Chambers.

ROLL CALL: Council Members present at roll call were: President Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr., Vice-president Keith Piescienski, Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr., Anthony Pristash, Robert McHale, Julia Kutzler, Edward Pany and Kenneth Hall. Also present were Mayor Thomas Reenock, Solicitor Steven Goudsouzian, Borough Manager LeRoy Brobst, Police Chief Bryan Kadingo and Recording Secretary, Meaghan Case.

Public Hearing on Proposed Ordinance Establishing Regulations for the Registration, Inspections and Licensing of Residential Rental Properties and Housing Occupancy Within Northampton Borough, Minimum Standards for Rental Properties, Violation, Penalties for Noncompliance and Appeals.

Receive Comments and Views from Borough Council:

Robert McHale thanked the public for their input and comments. He stated that the committee has revised the ordinance language and reduced the fees. Since the revisions were made, this is now a final draft of the ordinance. He said that he looked at similar rental ordinances comparable in size to the Borough of Northampton. He feels that the basic safety needs of residents are addressed in the ordinance.

Anthony Lopsonzski, Sr. stated that this is a well-reviewed ordinance that protects the tenant and landlord. It shows that the Borough is doing their due diligence.

Julia Kutzler is on the rental unit ordinance committee and she stated that the purpose of this ordinance is to protect the health and welfare of our Borough residents. She said that it will benefit both the landlords and tenants in the Borough. She reviewed a few examples of issues in rental properties that were brought to her attention.

Edward Pany stated that he is a life-long resident of the Borough. He said the town is not crumbling and people are still buying homes in the Borough. He stated that he was in favor of inspections, but with reasonable fees. He also said we are paying a code enforcement officer, health inspector and a building inspector. He said that it is unnecessary to pay a license fee every year and inspections should only take place when the rental property changes tenants.

Anthony Pristash stated that he agrees with the registrations and inspections for the health and safety of the residents, however, tenants are going to pay the price as far as any fees are concerned. He said that a Borough of our size does not need big government.

Mayor Reenock stated that we have everything we need in place following the 2009 property maintenance code. He said he is a long-time Borough resident and is also a renter in his own home. He had mentioned in previous meetings that people with a living trust, living in their home but the home is in a family member's name, should be exempt. He said none of these revisions were made in the final draft of the ordinance. He also added that with this ordinance, we will need more code enforcement officers and secretaries to keep up with the work involved.

Receive Comments and Views from the Public:

George Yaniger, owner of Gin Mill & Grill, 1750 Main Street, was present to explain his situation and licensing. He has a hotel license for 16 rooms located in the basement of the property. The LCB performs routine inspections yearly for every room. He has 8 rooms for transient guests that pay week to week with no lease agreement. This particular establishment will be exempt from this potential rental ordinance. The Gin Mill & Grill was established as a hotel in 1981 and was converted from a private club.

Derek Richmond of Boyer, Holzinger & Harak, 1216 Linden Street, Bethlehem, was present representing Alan Troutman, owner of 718 E. 18th Street. He stated that several statements in the ordinance are vastly overreaching. He also stated that this will impact the tenants and that tenant turnover could be significant. He also mentioned the lapse of rental potential because of inspections not being done in a timely manner.

Joan Marinkovits, 1824 Newport Avenue, was present to state that she owns a two-unit rental property. She agrees with inspections but is not in favor of the ordinance as written. She stated that we could send letters to property owners and stress the importance of moving permits. She also stated that any fees involved would be passed to the tenant. She also stated that once an ordinance is passed it becomes a law and must be heard at a magisterial level. Lastly, she said this may push good landlords out of the Borough.

Dale Munjone, 3660 Baldwin Drive, Easton, stated that he was having a hard time understanding the ordinance. He asked what the difference was between code for residential properties vs. code for rental properties. He said it's not fair that residential owned properties do not have to have inspections but rental properties do. He also asked how they came up with the fees for inspection, registration and fines.

Ron Classic, 468 E. 10th Street, stated that there are a handful of rental properties in the Borough that are making the majority look bad. Therefore, the good landlords suffer. He stated that as a landlord you have to do the right thing and make sure your properties are safe and maintained.

Jeff Odenwelder, 942 Dewey Avenue, owns several properties in the Borough. He stated that a few bad landlords make them all look bad. He said to throw the book at bad landlords and blighted properties in the Borough.

Terry Grauman, Walnutport, asked what the turn around time is for inspections. He said time is money and a delay in inspections with unoccupied properties cost rental property owners money. He also mentioned that HUD units are inspected once a year.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned by council president Anthony Lopsonzski, Jr. at 7:39 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Meaghan Case
Recording

Secretary

