

MINUTES

Public Hearing of the College Park City Council

Tuesday, January 9, 2007 – 7:30 p.m.

Ordinance No. 06-O-10: An Emergency Ordinance Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland Amending Chapter 125 “Housing Regulations,” Section 125-17 “Firesafety Laws” To Adopt By Reference The Fire Code Of Prince George’s County And The National Fire Protection Association 101 Life Safety Code.

PRESENT: Mayor Brayman; Councilmembers Milligan, Krouse, Catlin, Perry, Fellows and Hampton; Student Liaison Jesse Blitzstein.

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: Joe Nagro, City Manager; Janeen Miller, City Clerk; Sara Imhulse, Assistant to the City Manager; Suellen Ferguson, City Attorney; Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services; Steve Groh, Director of Finance

Mayor Brayman announced that this Public Hearing was being held to accept public comment on Ordinance No. 06-O-10, An Emergency Ordinance Of The Mayor And Council Of The City Of College Park, Maryland Amending Chapter 125 “Housing Regulations,” Section 125-17 “Firesafety Laws” To Adopt By Reference The Fire Code Of Prince George’s County And The National Fire Protection Association 101 Life Safety Code.

Bob Ryan, Director of Public Services and the appointed Assistant State Fire Marshal for the City of College Park, gave an overview. This Ordinance will fill a gap that will occur with the adoption of the new County Fire Code. Students who live in off-campus housing are considered at risk for fire fatalities, according to the non-profit research organization, the Center For Campus Fire Safety. The group identified the following risk factors: 80% of university student fire fatalities occurred in off-campus housing; non-sprinklered housing; missing or disabled smoke alarms; careless use of smoking materials; and alcohol consumption. An additional risk that has been recognized in national consensus standards is the ability to escape from a fire. The National Fire Protection Association, which produces consensus standards, has required a second means of escape from bedrooms since the 1956 Lifesafety Code. The current NFPA Lifesafety Code 2006 continues to adopt standards for a second means of escape and rescue from bedrooms. Prince George’s County is moving forward to adopt these standards, with the exception of the Chapter that includes 1- and 2-family dwellings. In College Park, this would exclude single-family homes that are sometimes used as group homes for up to five unrelated people. The City needs to adopt this Ordinance to ensure the safety of students and all residents of the City who are living in 1- and 2-family dwelling units, which includes R-55 zoned housing. This does not add a new standard, just maintains the existing standard. This is a nationally recognized standard of safety.

Mr. Ryan clarified that the requirement specifies the size and height of bedroom windows, to enable them to be used for escape and rescue, and is applicable to bedroom windows on any level of a home.

Frank Underwood, 2nd Vice President of the Maryland State Fireman's Association: Which represents 365 fire departments in the State of Maryland and over 35,000 fire fighters. He is also a County fire commissioner and has been a fire fighter for 40 years. The Maryland State Fireman's Association supports NFPA 101 – he doesn't understand how or why Prince George's County has overlooked Chapter 24. He urges the Council's support of this Ordinance. It needs to be done for the safety of everybody across the board.

Dave Dorsch, Chairperson of the College Park Landlord's Forum: He questioned why Prince George's County did not adopt this standard. He believes most people's homes do not meet this standard since it applies to all living areas, not just bedrooms. He thinks the City should enforce this without discrimination to owner-occupied as well as rental properties. The City only enforces this in rental properties. This code also addresses the width of stairways – is the City aware of this? He believes most homes do not comply with the code. He urges the Council not to approve this tonight without the proviso that it be enforced in all homes, not just rental homes.

There being no further public comment, the public hearing was closed at 7:58 p.m.

Janeen S. Miller, City Clerk