

Chesterfield faces backlash with re-occupancy permit proposal

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Chesterfield City Hall

After residents got wind of the proposed re-occupancy permit requirement for both rental units and sale homes in Chesterfield, they took to social media to voice their displeasure.

At the July 11 Finance and Administration Committee meeting, the Planning Department discussed the concept that would require new owners of single-family homes and duplexes, as well as renters of multi-family units, to obtain a re-occupancy permit from St. Louis County every time the property changes hands. An inspector would look at both the interior and exterior of a building or unit and inspect the mechanical, electrical, plumbing and structural features to ensure it meets county code. The cost for an inspection is currently \$95.50, which would be paid to the county by the new owner or renter. A follow-up inspection may be necessary to ensure compliance.

However, at the July 18 City Council meeting (which occurred after press time for the July 20 issue of *West Newsmagazine*), several council members said they had heard from constituents who were not in favor of this additional burden.

Council member Merrell Hansen (Ward 4) said she had received an enormous number of calls, with residents saying it was "too much government."

"A litany of situations made me walk over to that point of view," she said.

In particular, concerns about single-family homes, which are usually inspected prior to a sale.

Council member Mary Monachella (Ward 1) responded that the concern was for safety and noted that homes that are purchased and then "flipped" or resold might need extra scrutiny.

City Administrator Mike Geisel added that the city can only enforce problems associated with the exterior of a building and cannot enter a residence to address issues without the owner's permission.

Council member Michael Moore (Ward 3) stated that the original intent was to require inspections for multi-family units only, but the county does not differentiate based on owner status, only by single-family or multi-family, so the committee decided to include both.

At the July 18 meeting, Lauren Strutman, of Strutman Architects, said she was opposed to the inspection requirement and pointed out all the cities in St. Louis County that do not require re-occupancy inspections, including Wildwood and Clarkson Valley.

Lauren Strutman addresses Chesterfield City Council on July 18 regarding the topic of re-occupancy permits required for single-family homes.

City attorney noted that if approved, the city would still need to make changes to its own maintenance code and its contract with the county, so the permit process wouldn't be implemented immediately.

"Residents want certainty, " council member Barb McGuinness (Ward 1) noted. "They want us to slam the door on this."

Still, the council voted to send the issue back to the finance committee for further review. Only Hansen voted against sending it back, wanting to see the proposal dropped completely.

The next finance committee meeting is planned for 4 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 8.