

MEMORANDUM **Amended after 10/05/21 TC meeting**

To: Cornell Knight, Town Manager

Cc: Michele Gagnon, Planning Director

From: Angela Chamberlain, Code Enforcement Officer & Matthew Bartlett, Fire Chief

Date: September 23, 2021

Subject: Rental Registration Program

We would like to request that the Town Council consider forming a task force to investigate and prepare recommendations for a rental registration program with an inspection component for long-term rental housing.

The purpose of this registration program would be to ensure that dwelling units provide fundamentally safe and healthy accommodations without the program being overly burdensome to landlords. Bar Harbor presently relies solely on a complaint-based type of system (neighbors and tenants) to ensure safe and adequate housing. A program with systematic inspections can help ensure that the rental housing stock is maintained and that our guests and residents live in healthy conditions.

Multiple studies have found that a substantial number of dangerous code violations go undetected by communities without a registration program. Registries take the burden of complaining about safety issues off tenants, who often fear that speaking up will cause their landlords to retaliate.

Other Maine communities that have various types of registration programs are: Sanford, Orono, Rockland, Portland, Lewiston, and Yarmouth. Support grew for a rental registry program in Portland after a fire killed six people at 20 Noyes Street in 2014. The home did not have working smoke detectors and the back staircase had been blocked preventing the occupants from escaping.

We currently regulate and inspect (either through a permit or license process) Vacation Rentals, Employee Living Quarters and Shared Accommodations, but not long-term rentals. This will level the playing field for all types of housing units and make our community a safer place not only for our guests, but for our residents.

The benefits of a rental registration program include detecting and improving substandard and deteriorating rental housing, providing minimum standards for the health and safety of the occupants of the rental housing, providing minimum space standards to prevent overcrowding, and enforcement of minimum standards **to ensure the exterior of the building and the site is maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition**. Overall, this would improve the quality of available housing and improve the community as a whole.

Development of a rental registration program is an action item for strategy 9 “Ensure Quality Rental Housing” in the 2019 Housing Policy Framework. If the Council is in support of this concept, we would like to prepare an action plan for your consideration at a later date.

MEMORANDUM

To: Cornell Knight, Town Manager

Cc: Michele Gagnon, Planning Director

From: Angela Chamberlain, Code Enforcement Officer & Matthew Bartlett, Fire Chief

Date: September 23, 2021

Subject: Rental Registration Program

We would like to request that the Town Council consider forming a task force to investigate and prepare recommendations for a rental registration program with an inspection component for long-term rental housing.

The purpose of this registration program would be to ensure that dwelling units provide fundamentally safe and healthy accommodations without the program being overly burdensome to landlords. Bar Harbor presently relies solely on a complaint-based type of system (neighbors and tenants) to ensure safe and adequate housing. A program with systematic inspections can help ensure that the rental housing stock is maintained and that our guests and residents live in healthy conditions.

Multiple studies have found that a substantial number of dangerous code violations go undetected by communities without a registration program. Registries take the burden of complaining about safety issues off tenants, who often fear that speaking up will cause their landlords to retaliate.

Other Maine communities that have various types of registration programs are: Sanford, Orono, Rockland, Portland, Lewiston, and Yarmouth. Support grew for a rental registry program in Portland after a fire killed six people at 20 Noyes Street in 2014. The home did not have working smoke detectors and the back staircase had been blocked preventing the occupants from escaping.

We currently regulate and inspect (either through a permit or license process) Vacation Rentals, Employee Living Quarters and Shared Accommodations, but not long-term rentals. This will level the playing field for all types of housing units and make our community a safer place not only for our guests, but for our residents.

The benefits of a rental registration program include detecting and improving substandard and deteriorating rental housing, providing minimum standards for the health and safety of the occupants of the rental housing, providing minimum space standards to prevent overcrowding, and enforcement of the minimum standards for the maintenance of existing residential buildings to prevent slum and blight. Overall, this would improve the quality of available housing and improve the community as a whole.

Development of a rental registration program is an action item for strategy 9 “Ensure Quality Rental Housing” in the 2019 Housing Policy Framework. If the Council is in support of this concept, we would like to prepare an action plan for your consideration at a later date.