

Clackamas County Code Compliance Program: *Proposed Improvements*

Board of County Commissioners Study Session

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The way it's been . . .

- Established by County Commission in 2000
 - Driven by citizen complaints
 - Voluntary compliance first; enforcement as last resort
 - Reduce complaints and violations through community outreach and education
 - Violation priority matrix
- Pros & Cons
 - Reduced workload; guides staff on which cases to pursue
 - Slow, cumbersome; gives impression that potential violator is favored over complainant



Public outreach

- What we did
 - Meetings -- CPO Leaders, community and business groups, agencies, partners
 - Survey – at meetings and online
 - Citizen News articles & news releases
- What we heard
 - Do more – respond to anonymous complaints and issues seen by inspectors as part of usual duties
 - Do it faster – shorten timeline for violators
 - Don't let violators “play” the system
 - Do what you have to do to recoup costs
 - Don't have rules you don't enforce



The situation now. . .

- Limited staff (5.0 FTE) and resources
 - Impossible to respond to every complaint
 - Still need way for staff to prioritize complaints
 - Annual deficit of \$200,000 – 250,000
- Most important complaints: health and safety issues
- Most common complaints: livability issues
- Goals
 - Short-term: improve enforcement system
 - Long-term: eliminate rules that are never enforced

Proposed changes

- Philosophy
- Administrative changes
- Livability issues
- Prioritization methodology



Proposal: Philosophy



Consistently promote a safe and healthy community that will protect property values, enhance livability, and preserve the natural resources of our County through prompt, fair and equitable enforcement of County codes and ordinances.

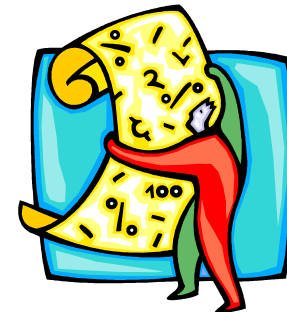
Proposal:

Encourage voluntary compliance

- Continue to encourage voluntary compliance
- Establish a voluntary, incentives-based program similar to Portland's *Get Legal*
 - Comprehensive community education on importance of permits and county codes
 - Waive monthly file maintenance fee and penalties when violations are brought forward voluntarily
 - Market the program to ensure residents know about it and its benefits

Proposal: Administrative issues

- Assess \$75/month file maintenance fee for all cases from confirmation of violation to violation file closure
- Keep violation file open until permits are final
- Use creative means – garnishments, collection of state tax refunds, etc. – to actually collect fees and fines
- Publish our practice for handling all violations – equitable, swift and predictable
- Retain complaint driven program but allow staff to report violations discovered in the course of their normal duties



Proposal: Administrative issues - 2

- Address all violations discovered on a property, not just those for which we receive a complaint
- Change name to ***Code Enforcement***
- Maintain priority list as an internal tool to guide staff; publicize *principles* of enforcement
- Set different priority levels for different categories
- Establish authority for administrative warrants to gain access to properties, if necessary
- Inform CPOs and other community groups about violations in their area

Proposal: Livability issues

- **Signs:** Send letter with complaint and corrective actions; follow up with citation
- **Noise:** Administered by Sheriff's Office; recommend dialogue to increase & improve enforcement
- **Barking dogs:** No county ordinance; recommend be handled with noise issues
- **Solid waste:** Enforce all complaints within UGB
- **Tall grass/weeds:** No county ordinance; if considered, administer like signs
- **Multiple low-priority violations:** 3 or more on one property would be elevated to Priority 1



Proposal:

Prioritization methodology, Plan A

- Enforce all codes
- Impact
 - Up to 520 more cases/year (60% increase)
 - Need to increase staff by 1.0 to 2.0 FTE
 - Increase costs by \$85,000 to \$170,000
 - Increase revenue by ???



Proposal:

Prioritization methodology, Plan B

- Implement all proposed administrative changes, modify violation priority system and enforce:
 - All building code-related violations
 - All solid waste violations inside UGB
 - Solid waste violations levels 1-4 outside UGB
 - Other codes, levels 1-4, throughout County
- Evaluate, then selectively increase enforcement to level 5
- Impact
 - Up to 200 additional cases/year
 - Maintain current staff level
 - Increase revenue by ??

Next steps



- Recommendations
 - Approve proposed philosophy statement
 - Authorize proposed administrative changes
 - Authorize implementation of Plan B
- Draft needed code changes
- Proceed through public hearing and approval process
- Implement changes
- Report impact to BCC six months later