
**VILLAGE OF SUGAR GROVE
BOARD REPORT**

TO: VILLAGE PRESIDENT & BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM: WALTER MAGDZIARZ, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: DISCUSSION: PROPERTY MAINTENANCE ENFORCEMENT
AGENDA: AUGUST 2, 2016 COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
DATE: JULY 29, 2016

ISSUE

Shall the Village Board consider a new approaches to property maintenance enforcement in the Village.

DISCUSSION

There are four approaches to property maintenance, each having a different level of aggressiveness:

- **Neighborhood or block walk-through inspection**

In this option, Village staff and consultants would perform a walk-through inspection of a given block or neighborhood and identify all code violations noted on each lot. The inspection team would perform a thorough visual assessment of each property including everything from roofs, gutters and downspouts to fences, stoops and driveways, and condition of painted surfaces and landscape material. Properties with code violations (zoning, building, property maintenance) would receive a letter documenting the violations and ordering corrections to avoid fines and other penalties.

Following the initial neighborhood walk-through, violation letters are mailed to affected property owners. Depending on the nature of the property maintenance items, a meeting to discuss a schedule for completion/correction may be initiated by staff. Other items noted in the walk-through may be given a compliance date. Visits to the block or neighborhood would continue during the season to monitor progress with compliance. Properties that exhibited no violations receive an “attaboy” letter.

This method is the most comprehensive and some find it intrusive and unwanted. It is also time consuming and involves multiple members of the staff during the walk through inspection. The walk through inspection is the most thorough approach. It has the benefit of establishing a baseline for the entire neighborhood or block for the season and inspection staff can establish a compliance schedule that can be monitored over the course of the season.

This approach is usually applied on an annual basis and usually in early spring so as to use the summer to get compliance as most property maintenance solutions are weather dependent, e.g. painting and mowing.

- **The Beat System**

In this approach, Village staff establishes a beat system for discovering and tracking property maintenance violations. This is a more proactive approach than the complaint-based system but not as comprehensive as the walk-through approach. The advantage is staff would visit a block or neighborhood on a regular basis specifically to identify violations and monitor progress on corrective action activities. Unlike the walk-through approach, the beat system is performed using the windshield survey technique.

This approach is not as time consuming initially as the walk-through approach but requires a fair amount of time since driving the beat consumes time that could be spent on building inspections or other administration and enforcement activities.

- **Chance Method**

In this approach, Village staff identifies property maintenance violations during routine travel to and from scheduled inspections or other property visits across the Village. While effective, this method is uneven as some blocks in a neighborhood—even entire neighborhoods—may not be visited for weeks at a time.

- **Complaint Approach**

In this option Village staff responds to complaints as they are received. When a resident is upset enough with a property maintenance situation in the neighborhood and calls the CD to complain we respond accordingly. However, operating property maintenance enforcement on a 911 basis is somewhat inefficient as CD does not have the luxury of having an inspector in the field at all times.

Presently, property maintenance is handled on a blended approach: the complaint basis and chance approach.

Property maintenance issues are not widespread. The majority of property maintenance complaints come from the oldest neighborhoods in the Village: Chelsea Meadows, Sugar Creek, Ridgewest, Richard's Tollway, Sheffield Plains, Maple Street Addition, and Calkins.

Property maintenance issues are distributed unevenly. Not all neighborhoods have property maintenance issues; often involve some type of hardship (income limitations resulting from fixed income, disruption in income due to medical issues or unemployment); generally correlate with age of structures; and, the property tenure (vacant vs occupied; owner occupied vs rental).

The homeowner associations (HOA) in the Village police their own properties. The HOA's are more aggressive and have the benefit of enforcing private covenants according to their own rules and penalties. Depending on the covenants, conditions and restrictions (CCR's) an HOA may be responsible for enforcing property maintenance standards that otherwise would be zoning matters.

Most common property maintenance complaints in Sugar Grove (in order of frequency):

- Tall grass/weeds
- Trailers, recreational vehicles in front yard
- Dog waste
- Sump pump discharge
- Peeling paint
- Garbage out too early at the curb/not picked up
- Abandoned swimming pools

Complaint process:

- Receive complaint
- Verify complaint (site visit)
- Report back to reporting party
- If violation does not exist, no further action; if violation exists, send corrective action notice to offender with a compliance date
- Re-visit site to verify compliance or revise schedule for correction
- If no compliance issue ticket, notice to appear, or mow order

Increasing the aggressiveness of property maintenance enforcement will require the addition of staff or a vendor to perform the work.

COST

There is no cost to the Village to discuss the proposal. Projected costs can be obtained if the Board desires further action.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Village Board provide the Village staff with specific direction concerning property maintenance enforcement activities.