

RE-INSTITUTING INSPECTION OF RENTAL HOUSING.

On July 26th, 2018 City Council met and reviewed 5 requests for orders of demolition against blighted housing in Westminster. The discussion turned to the ownership and use of other housing that would soon, if not immediately abated, be presented for demolition orders. A number of the worst housing situations reviewed by codes enforcement personnel, since April, have been rental housing units.

As early as 1962, and last updated in 2012, the City has had a requirement for inspection of rental property. This ordinance has been sporadically enforced over the years it appears. Due to the nature of the problem the Council directed a renewed enforcement effort.

The *attached checklist* is available for download and will be the one used to clear rental property for connection to utilities within the City.

Inspections will be carried out by City personnel, both Codes Enforcement and the Fire Department as personnel are available in order to ensure a quick turnaround on inspections.

We will begin use of the form and the process this Monday August 13th, having had a chance for staff training to make sure it is carried out in the manner indicated in the Ordinance and to avoid any unnecessary delays in the landlord-tenant transaction.

It is worth noting that all of the requirements are minimal and well below the standards set in the most used reference, " *The International Building Code*" established by the International Building Council. It appear these minimal requirements bet strike the best balance between efficiency and the minimum safeguards needed for basic human habitation.

Understand it is both the responsibility of a landlord and tenant to ensure the inspection is completed. Unless the owner(s) of the dwelling unit is actually occupying, and plans to have the utilities in their name or the name of a household member, any occupancy will be construed as a tenant-landlord relationship.

It is also very important to make sure the rental unit complies with all twelve provisions on the checklist before requesting an inspection, in order to avoid repeat trips to the same location. Failing the inspection will create a longer time period before utilities can be connected.

It has been our experience that most landlords in the City offer units that easily meet these requirements. Lately we have uncovered situations where underage children were living in dire circumstances with recognized electrical hazards in rental housing well below the level of decency established by these Standards. Our Council felt it was their responsibility as community leaders to address this situation since it clearly within the province of municipal government in South Carolina to enforce minimal housing standards.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

§ 93.38 - INSPECTION OF DWELLING OR DWELLING UNITS REQUIRED.

(A) The City Council may cause any rental dwelling to be inspected to determine whether or not the minimum requirements for human habitation have been met as provided in this chapter, and any person requesting the city to provide utility service shall produce evidence of inspection and compliance with the provisions of this chapter.

(B) The landlord or tenant who willfully fails to have the premises inspected by the Zoning Administrator and who rents or enters into possession of such premises without the same being inspected and approved by the Zoning Administrator shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

(C) Any person violating this section shall be subject to a fine or imprisonment within the discretion of the Court.

('62 Code, § 6-9.1) (Am. Ord. 2012-06-19-02, passed 6-19-2012)