

City of Keene
New Hampshire

PLANNING, LICENSES AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday May 24, 2017

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

Members Present:

Philip M. Jones
George S. Hansel
Robert B. Sutherland
Bartlomiej K. Sapeta

Staff Present:

City Manager, Med Kopczynski
Fire Chief, Mark Howard
Fire Lt., John Bates
Deputy City Clerk, William Dow

Members Absent:

David C. Richards

Chair Jones called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

1. Relating to Fire Alarms – Ordinance O-2017-05

Fire Chief Mark Howard stated that staff is proposing to amend Chapter 34 Emergency Services as well as the fee schedule relating to Fire Alarms in Appendix B. The Ordinance would adopt the NFPA Fire Alarm Code 2016 Edition. The City currently follows the 2009 Edition.

The Chief highlighted certain sections of the Ordinance. He noted Section 34-94 upgrades the connection to the fire boxes to include electronic systems as well as mechanical systems. This system serves 109 municipal boxes throughout the city. He referred to a recent CIP \$50,000 upgrade of the fire alarm system. Section 34-95 adds a new section to the code for a radio box system which will help expand beyond the hard wire system. The language change would permit a wireless system.

Councilor Hansel asked whether this new system will result in cost saving for new development. Chief Howard stated one of the savings a customer would see is that previously a customer would be required to pay a monthly phone line fee for monitoring a tamper switch. The radio box has the capability to monitor the tamper switch for the \$447 fee the customer is currently charged. Any additional security monitoring would be however, the customer's responsibility.

Councilor Sapeta asked whether this technology can be used as a retrofit as well. Lt. Bates agreed and added the School System currently pays for two dedicated phone lines and for the master box and they are required to have forced notification which is the hard

wired master box on the building. With this new technology they can switch to wireless and their sprinkler system and fire alarm system can be monitored. If they chose to, they could drop the two phone lines and the third party answering service and go directly to the Fire Department. The radio box signal that has been installed within one second of an alarm being transmitted, it is transmitted for dispatch. With the outside third party, they are allowed 90 seconds to acknowledge, 90 second to make a phone call and another 90 seconds for dispatch to respond, The radio box allows a 1 second response time versus a three-minute response time.

The City Manager asked whether over time, the hard wired system will be replaced by the radio box system. The Chief stated it could be, but he would like to see a trend in this new technology of long term success. He agreed some of the systems the City has are very old. Lt. Bates added if it is just replacing a box the cost is not too much unless the wires have to be replaced as well. States like Massachusetts are making this a required change. The City Manager stated over time if these are systems that could be replaced and there is cost savings attached to it, it might be the way the City moves forward.

Chief Howard referred to Sec. 34-96 which strikes the reference to street boxes. The City eliminated street boxes several years ago.

Referring to Section 34 -112, the operating frequency for two way radio enhancement system was updated.

Referring to the fees in Appendix B, Chief Howard explained the application fee is going to become part of the permit fee. The Chief added staff did a review of the City Council's Fiscal Policy as it relates to fees. There are no fee increases proposed in the Ordinance. The fees were last amended in 2009.

He explained all costs related to Fire Prevention, Fire Administration, Fire Alarm (including fleet) were looked at and the top personnel such as Lt. Bates, the department Administration person and the Fire Alarm officer's responsibilities were split between these cost centers depending on how their responsibilities are calculated.

Councilor Sutherland asked whether the cost increase for Southwestern NH Fire Mutual Aid was able to be captured by an increase to fees. Chief Howard responded the cost for SWNHFMA for fire alarm monitoring has not changed.

Chief Howard stated when looking at the fees in Appendix B, the staff reviewed the City Council's fiscal policy and I particular when fees are charges are set at something less than full cost recovery when a high level of cost recovery negatively impacts the delivery of service to low-income groups and . He continued that in reviewing the provisions of the fiscal policy he stressed life safety in considering fees.

Referring to Resolution R-2016-26, Chief Howard stated fees and charges will be set at something less than full cost recovery when: a high level of cost recovery will negatively impact the delivery of service to low-income groups and collecting the fees would discourage

compliance with regulatory requirements and adherence to said requirements is self-identified, and as such, failure to comply would not be readily detected by the City.

The Chief went on to say the Fire Department calculated \$235,399 for costs. In terms of revenue, four specific line items were looked at: fire permitting, fire alarm access permits, master box fees, and haz mat storage. These four lines items bring in revenue of \$154,296. There is another \$4,000 - \$6,000 estimated, which is what the Building Department charges the Fire Department for plan review was not included in these calculations. Chief Howard noted they are at a 65% collection rate, which he felt was an acceptable rate.

Councilor Hansel felt what is being presented seems like a modest increase but noted the fire drill used to be at per market value, and currently the fee is \$75. Chief Howard responded this is so that entities don't have to pay this fee two and three times a month and it is a way for companies to train one of their personnel. He continued fire personnel don't really need to be present and this is a way to empower these companies to take care of their own facilities. What they are being trained to do is not to enter the Fire Department's circuit via their master box.

The City Manager stated the application fee for fire and building departments was originally instituted because the City was afraid customers would never come back and pick up their permit, which is a rare occurrence. There is also a shift in thinking of how they can organize this function to eventually become an online system. The intention is that for small class of permits there is a reduction in bureaucracy from the standpoint of getting those permits. The focus here is life safety.

Councilor Sapeta questioned whether the wireless system could be in danger of being hacked into or impacted by computer viruses. Chief Howard answered in the negative and added it is a radio frequency through the FCC and it is self-tested every day.

Councilor Hansel made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Sutherland.

On 4-0 vote, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommends the adoption of Ordinance O-2017-05.

2. Relating to Fire Prevention Code - Ordinance O-2017-06

Chief Howard stated this ordinance is being recommended the adoption of NFPA 1 "Uniform Fire Code", 2015 Edition as published by the National Fire Protection Association and the NFPA 101 "Life Safety Code", 2015 Edition as published by the National Fire Protection Association. The last updated was in 2009. The ordinance will also update fees in Appendix B.

Lt. Bates stated the NFPA section was already exempt in 2009 and the State has exempted it again. He noted that language for wireless interconnected system has been added for smoke alarms.

In the past what was permitted was a hard wired smoke detector with a battery backup but there is now wireless technology permitted for single family homes. Chair Jones asked about the Carbon Monoxide system. Lt. Bates stated this has not changed. All rental homes and new construction are required to have a carbon monoxide system on every floor.

Councilor Sutherland noted the first Ordinance is referring to a 2016 edition and the second Ordinance is referring to 2015 and asked whether this was correct. Lt. Bates stated it was correct and added NFPA Codes don't all happen in the same year. As the Fire Chief, Chief Howard can come before the Council to exceed the State's standard, but not to lessen the requirements. He stated Keene adopts what the State does, but tonight his recommendation would be to move forward with NFPA 1 and 101 so that contractors and fire personnel don't have to go back and forth between code books to determine which one should be used. The Chief noted that NFPA is still before a Legislative Committee, which is considering its adoption. The State Fire Marshall has adopted NFPA 101. The point of debate before the House Committee on NFPA 1 deals with the use of manufactured I-beams in basements. The Chief noted that many perspectives are brought into these amendments to national building and fire codes, which attempt to balance cost and life safety.

The Manager noted there are building code issues and fire code issues – NFPA 101 is identical to what is outlined in the Building Code and the debate is always about life safety and cost.

Referring to the fees in Appendix B, Lt. Bates noted the application fee is being absorbed into the actual fee so that it is not confusing to contractors.

Councilor Sapeta asked how these changes compare to other municipalities of the same size. Chief Howard stated from a cost standpoint Keene is competitive. The City is collecting 65% of its cost with these fees.

Councilor Sapeta made the following motion which was seconded by Councilor Hansel.

On 4-0 vote, the Planning, Licenses and Development Committee recommend adoption of Ordinance O-2017-06.

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Krishni Pahl, Minute Taker