

CITY OF KEENE’S REBUTTAL TO ANONYMOUS AND SPURIOUS ALLEGATIONS AGAINST COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYEES

Residents of Keene have had delivered to their homes late at night an anonymous pamphlet titled “Department Spotlight” making serious and false allegations against the City’s Community Development Director, and the City’s Community Development Department. The allegations are false and misleading, and also constitute a reprehensible personal attack on a dedicated and highly professional public servant to the community. The following is the City’s refutation of the specific allegations contained in the pamphlet:

1. Cost Comparison Between City of Keene and Town of Bedford, NH:

- \$1,521,000 is the total budget for the City of Keene’s Community Development Department. This Department includes the functions of Planning, GIS, Zoning, Health, Building Code, and Property and Housing Standards, and is not limited to Code Enforcement. The cost for the Housing Inspector position, excluding benefits, is approximately \$60,000, annually.
- The Town of Bedford’s budget for Code Enforcement is approximately \$316,000. That Department is part of the Bedford Fire Department, which has a total budget of \$5,536,340. The Bedford Health Department, which is also part of the Town’s Fire Department, handles complaints about rental properties, and has a budget of \$31,404. Bedford does not perform non-rental residential property inspections.

2. Statement of Various Complaints:

- The pamphlet conflates together all types of possible Code violations, including under Property and Housing Standards and the State Building Code. Property standards violations such as trash or parking violations do not rise to the level of requiring a Notice to Vacate for health or safety reasons. Serious violations of the Building Code or the Health Code that threaten health and safety may require such a Notice if the property is determined to be unfit for human habitation.
- The pamphlet identifies 63 complaints (19, 11, 8, 25) listed as “resolved.” However, this list is only a fraction of the number of complaints that the Department receives on an annual basis. None of the listed complaints would require a Notice to Vacate the property. Most property standards complaints are resolved through cooperation by the property owner, and not by formal enforcement action.
- The reference in the pamphlet to 7,835 so called “Backlog of Reported Property Standards Violations” is a reference to a single bulk submission delivered by one individual to the Community Development Department on September 7, 2021, consisting of 24 large plastic boxes containing what are purported to be allegations of violations of the Building Code, or property standards, against numerous properties throughout the City. The City believes that the bulk submission is retaliation for an enforcement action by the City against the individual for performing residential building construction without first obtaining the required building permits.

- With reference to 429 alleged “Backlogged Reported Violations Warranting No Occupancy Orders,” the City is unaware of any such alleged complaints unless they are buried within the bulk submission delivered on September 7th.
 - With reference to the so called 42 “Reported Yet Unaddressed Violations at Homes of Code Enforcement Employees and City Leaders,” the City conducted a review of the submitted allegations and determined that they lacked a sufficient evidentiary basis for further investigation or enforcement action, and so informed the complaining party. The City believes that the submission was also tendered in retaliation for the enforcement action by the City against the individual for failing to obtain building permits.
3. Allegation of Website Deletions:
- The allegation of code violations being deleted by City staff from the City’s website is demonstrably false. The complaint at issue and the disposition of the complaint may be viewed at:
<https://keene.portal.iworq.net/KEENE/cases/400?search=42+rich&searchField=propertyaddress>
4. Patrolling the City:
- The City does not conduct patrols of the City seeking out revenue generating violations of Property and Housing Standards or the Building Code.
5. Photographs Depicted:
- To the best of the City’s knowledge, the photograph of the decrepit house depicted in the pamphlet is not of a house located in Keene. However, if that specific property location is identified to the City and within the City limits, the City will conduct an appropriate investigation. The City does in fact encourage new construction and building renovations, but by first obtaining the proper permits.
6. Building Code Reminders:
- The City does encourage compliance with the Property and Housing Standards to help ensure that Keene is an attractive, safe, and healthy place to live. However, the stated allegation that “You Cannot Legally Live In Your House” if a property is not in compliance with those standards is patently false.

The City understands that reasonable people may have different opinions about policy and process and the standards that should be followed by individuals living in a civil society, and appropriate processes exist to resolve these differences in a reasonable and productive manner. However, pursuing public personal attacks that are motivated by vindictiveness, and which are based on false and misleading information is not, and should not be, acceptable in any civil society.