

**Approved Minutes – Special Meeting
BUILDING CODES ADVISORY COMMISSION
Held on Tuesday, January 22, 2013 at 5:30 p.m.
In Room 101 of the Oak Park Village Hall**

ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

PRESENT: Commissioners, Hudson, Kelly, Maynard, Nussbaum and Visteen
Chairman Gilchrist
Staff Liaison Witt

Guests: Kevin Wiley, Battalion Chief
Nicholas Cuda, Property Owner
Mark Finger, Property Owner

QUORUM: The meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m. and a quorum was declared.

AGENDA

A voice vote was taken and the agenda was approved as written.

MINUTES

Minutes from the meetings held on 11/14/12 and 12/06/12 were reviewed and approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public comments were offered as follows:

1. Nicholas Cuda indicated he owns two properties within the Village at 6429 and 6525 North Avenue. He discussed the challenges of raising the occupancy level within his buildings as well as his recent expenditure of \$20,000 to fix a collapsed sewer at one of the buildings. He stated he understood the benefits of fire sprinklers but indicated that any change in the codes that results in additional costs would be detrimental to his ability to recruit tenants. He asked if the existing uses in the buildings would be grandfathered as part of the proposed amendments.
2. Mark Finger asked what the thresholds would be for when fire sprinkler requirements would kick in.

NON-AGENDA PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no non-agenda public comments.

REGULAR AGENDA

The following items were discussed.

1. The proposed amendments do not offer grandfathering of any use. They do not; however, require the retroactive installation of fire sprinklers in any space that was legally built without

fire sprinklers, regardless of the size of the space versus the new fire sprinkler square foot thresholds.

2. Steve Witt provided a short summary of the progression of the fire sprinkler thresholds from previous code versions.

Village Ordinance in 1984 established the fire area limit for not requiring fire sprinklers for any use group at 3,500 square feet. The construction of masonry fire walls was permitted to reduce the overall building floor area to spaces not exceeding 3,500 square feet to avoid the need for sprinkling. Although the area limits were applied to buildings when a use of a higher level hazard was introduced, the limits were not applied during renovation projects where the use classification or occupancy type did not change. Application of the fire area limits for renovation projects in which the use does not change is a new concept introduced by the International Existing Building Code (IEBC).

In 2004, the Previous BPS Director changed the fire area limits without approval of the Building Codes Advisory Commission to much larger areas. The proposed amendments are seeking to return to the previous limits of 3,500 square feet, and to apply those limits to renovation projects as well as new construction. Renovations that exceed 50% of the building area and are over 3,500 square feet would be required to have fire sprinklers under the proposed amendments.

A building owner would have the option of providing a fire safety analysis of the building, per the IEBC which would be reviewed for an equivalent level of fire safety. Mr. Cuda's own building at 6525 North Avenue is a case where the building department worked with the building owner to provide an equivalent level of life safety for the day care facility when the exact requirements of the code could not be met for rescue openings from the day care facility.

3. Steve Witt indicated that another trigger point that could be used to determine when fire sprinklers are required is based on a comparison of the alteration cost versus the replacement cost of the building. Forest Park currently uses such a method.
4. Member Hudson indicated that the Village is not the only entity in control of fire safety of buildings in the Village. The Office of the State Fire Marshall enforces their own code, the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code, which can sometimes be more restrictive than the local codes.
5. Member Hudson noted that the commission was seeking to achieve a balance between life safety and business concerns.
6. Battalion Chief Wiley indicated that the intent of the fire area limits is to make it easier to fight fires and easier to exit a building. Member Hudson brought up the Our Lady of the Angels school fire that occurred in the late 1950's in Chicago as a case that is studied by code officials with respect to improving the fire safety of buildings for exiting.
7. Member Nussbaum proposed that work areas including strictly modifications to mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems should not be included in determining the percent of floor area under construction for the 50% rule. Changes that affect life safety, structural modifications and modifications to architectural features such as walls should be considered when calculating the 50% rule. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved.
8. Member Hudson asked if the 50% applied to the building area or the fire area. Discussion on that question was deferred to the next meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

The next meeting was set for February 21, 2013 at 5:30 p.m. (regular meeting).

ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved. The meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

By: Stephen Witt
Staff Liaison,
Building Codes Advisory Commission