

Fire Prevention Bureau Fee Proposal

The incident that never occurs is the least costly for the City to handle. This is what prevention is all about. The Lebanon Fire Department, Fire Prevention Bureau currently offers a limited range of fire prevention services. These services include inspection services, fire investigation, public education and plans review.

Inspection services are for new construction, complaint inspections, and permit inspections. There are no on-going existing building inspectional services at the present time. Fire investigation is done to a reasonable level at this time. Public education by the Lebanon Fire Department is quite limited with a heavy reliance upon outside agencies to supplement our efforts. Plans review is fairly complete, but not as timely as could be hoped for.

The steady growth of the City, and the resulting demands for an increasing level of services has forced the Fire Department to limit services to those already being provided or, in some cases, to drop services (for example a full in-service inspection program). Existing Fire Prevention personnel have not been able to keep up with demands for service to the level which was the standard as recently as 1999. An effort to re-institute previously carried out Fire Prevention Bureau services, or to add some of the other vital services Fire Prevention should carry out have been hampered by a lack of personnel and, as a corollary, lack of funding. The logical answer is service fees.

Many cities and towns in New Hampshire have turned to fees as a methodology for funding fire department services. A survey of cities and towns has not been completed, but fire departments in Dover, Concord, Hooksett, Hudson, and Merrimack all responded to an e-mail request for fee information.

By setting fees which are associated with the costs incurred to maintain a fire department inspection effort, much of the cost can be off-set. (The Town of Hartford, Vermont recently began collecting fees for these services, and expects to collect approximately \$135,000.)

Insuring that a place of business, or a rental residence is safe for the occupants, employees, or the general public is the purpose of a fire safety code. Inspections are required to guarantee this, and is a cost of doing business.

Currently, all citizens are sharing equally in the expense of conducting fire inspections. However, the direct benefit of these inspections accrues to the property holder, the employees, and their customers. It is reasonable to expect that those who directly benefit from the inspection program be responsible for at least part of the costs associated with those inspection programs. While all property owners pay their share for emergency response services, non-emergency services are most heavily weighted to buildings under construction and commercial properties. Single family homes do not require annual inspections, nor are they typically being renovated on a regular basis. The impact on these occupancies would be minimal. Commercial properties and apartment buildings are the occupancies which require more intensive, non-

emergency fire department services. To that end a permit or fee structure, to help cover costs where the City might not otherwise incur costs, is reasonable.

A business or apartment building with code violations may require multiple inspections before violations are corrected. Court time may also be involved. Yet it is the average taxpayer who currently shoulders the burden of these costs. This in spite of the fact that the businesses and property owners who fail to meet fire codes are the principle reason for complaint inspections, or re-inspections during the construction process. A fee system would provide an incentive to see that property owners meet all safety regulations in order to avoid a re-inspection fee.

The fee system proposed would translate into a reduction in the direct costs to the City. Costs would shift from the general taxpayer to the users of the fire prevention services. **As a matter of policy, the City could also choose to fully fund all aspects of a traditional fire prevention effort including additional public education efforts, and an on-going inspection of apartment buildings.** Such additional services would require additional personnel.

The method of collection for the proposed fee system would be two fold:

Part I; All building plans and site plans submitted at the Codes Department would incur a fee to off set fire department review of those construction and site plan documents. This fee would be collected at the Codes Department right along with the typical building permit fee.

Part II; All other fees associated with the accompanying schedule of either plan reviews or inspections would be billed out by the Fire Department.

Those fees would include:

Fire Protection Plan Review
Fire Dept Fee Schedule

Building Plan Review 5% of Building Dept. Permit Fee

Site Plan Reviews

<u>PURD</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>
<u>PUD</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>
<u>Commercial</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>

Sprinkler Systems per riser:

<u>13D Systems</u>	<u>No charge</u>
<u>13R Systems</u>	<u>\$100.00</u>
<u>13 Systems</u>	
<u>10,000 Square foot</u>	<u>\$225.00</u>
<u>10,000 Square foot - 25,000 Square foot</u>	<u>\$300.00</u>
<u>25,000 Square foot - 52,000 Square foot</u>	<u>\$475.00</u>

Other Fire Suppression Systems	\$185.00 Eng.
	\$137.00 Pre-Eng.

Modifications to Existing Systems	\$50.00 (flat fee)
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Fire Alarm Systems

0 - 49 devices	\$75.00
50 - 99 devices	\$100.00
over 99 devices	\$150.00

Fire Prevention Inspections
Fire Dept Fee Schedule

Oil Burner (Residential)	\$25.00
Oil Burner (Commercial)	\$100.00

Propane Furnace (Residential)	\$25.00
Propane Furnace (Commercial)	\$100.00

Underground Storage Tank - 500 Gallons (Residential)	\$25.00
Underground Storage Tank - 500 Gallons (Commercial)	\$100.00

Family Day Care 1 - 6 children	\$25.00
Group Day Care - 7 - 12 children	\$40.00
Day Care Centers - 13+ children	\$50.00
Foster Care Inspection	\$25.00

Master Box Connection original connection only	\$100.00
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The existing inspection module software currently utilized by the Fire Prevention Bureau has a fee tracking system built in place. The types of activities to be included in the accompanying fee schedule and the fees associated with those activities are an average of the fees associated with the most common activities from the responding communities. Any part or all of the schedule could be adopted by the City.

Another area that can be investigated is an increase in the fee for monitoring fire alarm and burglar systems. The current ordinance, administered by the Police Department has a \$50.00 per year fee. This is the original fee as adopted in 1988. This is exceptionally low in comparison to surrounding communities. By way of example the Town of Hanover charges \$300.00 per year for police alarms and \$300.00 per year for master boxes.

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