

# **WINDHAM TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES**

**WINDHAM TOWN HALL AUDITORIUM**

**Tuesday, October 5, 2010 - 6:00 P.M.**



The Town of Windham Council held a Public hearing on October 5, 2010, at 6:00 p.m. in the Windham Town Hall Auditorium, 979 Main Street, Willimantic, Connecticut, to hear public comment on the following ordinances:

Chapter 4-41 through 4-48 Anti-Blight ordinance: Updates and changes to anti-blight ordinance has been added to address foreclosed homes, adding language for “broken windows” and “peeling paint” to the definition of blight. Additionally, un-maintained, overgrown yards and high grass would also be considered to be in violation.

Chapter 6-1 through 6-150 Housing code: Updates to the code include lowering the mandatory minimum temperature, which a landlord has to maintain in an apartment from 70 degrees to 68 degrees, update to the housing code committee to remove conflicts, and to add person from public, add minimum ceiling height of 7 feet to language. Other minor updates to code have been added to make code conform to building and fire codes.

## **Call to Order**

Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge opened the public hearing at 6:00 p.m.

Code Enforcement Officer Matt Vertefeulle gave a brief explanation on the changes to the Blight and Housing Code Ordinance. He mentioned that some of the changes were due to the change of government from Board of Selectmen to Town Council and Town Manager. Mr. Vertefeulle also mentioned that on the blight ordinance they added overgrown vegetation, broken windows and peeling paint and on the housing ordinances they changed things like appeals board, household temperature and added a 2 year apartment permit.

## **Public Comment**

Tom DeVivo, 30 South Park Street, Willimantic, spoke in favor of the blight ordinance. He requested that the Town Council and the residents of the Town of Windham help Mr. Vertefeulle and his staff and provide them with the tools they need including additional staff. Mr. DeVivo spoke regarding a blighted property across the street from his home,

which to him is a quality of life issue. He passed out a picture of the house he described to the Council members present.

Michael Westerfield, Lewiston Avenue, Willimantic, spoke not in favor of the peeling paint section of the blight ordinance because it is too vague of a statement the way it is written. He also felt that growing vegetation should be removed.

Everette Berube, Oak Street, Willimantic, stated he drives to North Street and Ash Street and there are a few houses that are full of rubbish. He thanked the Town for working on the blight issues.

Dennie Cronin, 247 North Street, Willimantic, spoke in support of both proposed ordinances.

Laurel Freeman, Bellevue Street, stated that she is faced with a property tax increase this year and on top of that she just got a 20% pay decrease in her job and the last quote to have her house painted was \$15,000, which she can't afford. She said she couldn't understand how the Town can require home improvements when the economy is so bad.

Joel Maya, President of concerned landlords in Willimantic, spoke against the \$100 fee per unit as a yearly fee for landlords.

Carl York, Windham Center, stated he lives in a historic home and couldn't understand why the Town is amending the blight ordinance to add things that were removed from the first time the ordinance was adopted. Mr. York works at UCONN and he said that for them it is a negative to regulate vegetation because landscapers like uncontrolled vegetation because is a subjective value.

Peter Quercia, Willimantic, appreciates the work Mr. Vertefeuille is doing on blight. Mr. Quercia spoke regarding burned out structures.

Henry Crane, suggested to the Town that to help the landlords there should be 2 bulky waste pickups because it is a burden for tenants and landlords to get rid of their stuff.

Pat Veins stated that most of the people in Town are in violation already when it comes to painting their homes. There is too much lead and it is very expensive to paint a home especially the older homes.

Doug Lary stated that he took the recent EPA certification and mentioned that your house is worth zero and that Windham has the lowest test scores. He recommended to the Council that before adopting the paint section within the ordinance they think and research the issue on lead. Mr. Lary mentioned that his property is a Victorian home and it has lead and it will be more than \$50,000 to repaint the home. He thanked Mr. Vertefeuille for all the hard work.

Barbara spoke in support of the grass and paint provision because it is a public health and quality of life issue here in Windham. She said she trusts the Town and the authority to use the new ordinance wisely.

Larry Kellog, Spring Street, Willimantic, stated that he lives on the corner of Spring and High Street and lives next to a house that has a burned garage and the roof is caving in. Mr. Kellog spoke in favor of the ordinance and many residents on our street have spent money to side their homes and clean up the area.

Rosita Vining believes it has been part of the solution not the problem. She mentioned that with a small power washer you could make miracles with the outside of your home. Mrs. Vining is not in favor of home inspections because her properties are commercial and her insurance company inspects them every year.

David Hemenway, Pigeon Road, Willimantic, stated that he supports the intent but doesn't understand why the Town is muddling the water by how creative they want to be when we know what the problems are. He suggests that the Town deal with the blighted properties but by adopting the proposed ordinance his taxes are going up by 10%.

### **Adjournment**

Mayor Ernest S. Eldridge adjourned the public hearing at 6:40 p.m.

Submitted By:

Neida I. Rosado  
Clerk of the Town Council.