



**Fire/Code Inspections Task Force
Notes from first Phase 2 meeting
January 5, 2015**

Phase 2 Task Force Members:

Julie Gregor, Inspection Supervisor – Portland Housing Authority
Katie McGovern, Tenant Advocate – Pine Tree Legal Association
Crandall Toothaker – Southern Maine Landlord Association
Carleton Winslow – Southern Maine Landlord Association
Rich Bianculli, Neighborhood Prosecutor - City of Portland, Corporation Counsel/Police Dept
Jay Fleming, Deputy Chief - Boston Fire Dept (not present)
Keith Gautreau, Assistant Chief - City of Portland, Fire Dept
Sheila Hill-Christian, Acting City Manager - City of Portland
Tammy Munson, Inspections Division Director - City of Portland
Tuck O'Brien, Chair, Portland Planning Board
Jon Rioux, Inspections Division Deputy Director - City of Portland
Julie Sullivan, Acting Chief of Staff - City of Portland

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review phase one findings
 - a. Education plan
 - i. Tenants are fearful - worry that they have to trade safety for affordability
 - ii. Glad to hear that information will be accessible for young, low-income people via online database with information on each property
 - iii. City and Pine Tree Legal Association (PTLA) can work together on landlord/tenant handbook (each has a version currently)
 - iv. Landlords' association could have session(s) with tenants' group for education
 - v. Portland Fire could provide train-the-trainer on basic life safety – list of basic safety principles on web site currently
 - vi. Should also target General Assistance (GA) recipients for education
 - vii. Question about GA list of landlords they will not rent to – is there City action then taken against those landlords?
 - viii. Tenants may not be aware that they can let an inspector in.
 - ix. Need regular calendar of trainings for landlords – how reach those who are not part of Southern Maine Landlord Association? Cannot include information with tax bills.

- b. Inspections and Code Enforcement – staff, roles, structures, processes: What problems are we trying to solve?
 - i. Concern that third-party inspectors would write up every little thing – how make sure to prioritize? How make sure these inspectors are qualified? Consider using standardized checklist.
 - ii. City should go ahead with risk-based scoring for properties in order to prioritize
 - iii. City staff need more training – especially on software, documentation
 - iv. Need better communication among City staff who have eyes on these buildings so they can report any concerns
 - v. Having firefighters conduct inspections is good because then they are familiar with building layouts
 - vi. PHA, City and others have collaborated on hot spots (defined by calls for service) – needs better organization
 - vii. Need someone whose job it is to ensure good internal communication, training, software usage
 - viii. Concern that inspectors may be biased if a tenant complains and there is an eviction underway
 - ix. Need to ensure copies of inspection reports and communications to landlords in the public database – clear what landlord is to fix, what steps City is taking
 - x. Inspectors need to ensure their reports are clear, concise and thorough – checklist?
 - xi. Need to be sure rules are being applied consistently
 - xii. Inspection required at transfer of building ownership?
 - xiii. Need to enforce current requirement for all landlords to register with the City
 - xiv. Code enforcement has one inspector who handles all complaints, plus 3 others focused on building, plumbing and electrical for new construction and rehab.
 - xv. Fire can only do proactive inspections for buildings with 3 or more units; can only go into 1- and 2-family rentals if responding to a complaint
 - xvi. Need to see high-profile enforcement actions. And what are the consequences for disabled smoke detectors?

3. Key points

- a. Need checklists for fire, building inspectors as well as for all City staff working in the field
- b. Use risk-based scoring to prioritize buildings/units most in need of inspection
- c. Enforcement requirement for landlords to register
- d. Change enforcement to a ticket and fine process, ensuring clarity and follow-up as well
- e. Consider developing a phased process with items having most impact first

4. Next steps – summarize recommendations from relevant studies and distribute in advance of next meeting; bring more specificity to recommendations discussed above
 - a. Mon 1/12, 2:30-4, rm 24. Review and prioritize recommendations from prior studies/reports and discuss potential impacts on landlords and tenants
 - b. Mon 1/26, 2:30-4, rm 209. Draft recommendations for City Council's Public Safety, Health & Human Services Committee
 - c. Th 1/29, 2:30-4, rm 209. Finalize recommendations for Committee.
 - d. Public Meeting – Tues 2/3, 5:30-7 pm, rm 24
 - e. Presentation to Public Safety, Health & Human Services Committee – Tues 2/10, 5:30 pm, Council Chambers.