

**CITY OF URBANA
PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE BOARD OF APPEALS
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2007**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Don Keeler, Tom Welch, Dick Halberstadt, Kevin Fahey and Gary Stebbins

STAFF PRESENT:

Clay Baier, Stephen Chrisman and Vivian Petrotte

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jane Hedges

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Gary Stebbins at 4:01 p.m.

OLD BUSINESS: APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Gary Stebbins asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting held Tuesday, July 10, 2007. Dick Halberstadt made the motion to approve the minutes and Gary Stebbins seconded the motion. All agreed and the minutes were approved as read.

There was no other old business to discuss.

NEW BUSINESS: The case to be heard was PMCBA-07-V-02; 1502 S. Orchard St. Mr. Stebbins asked the owner, Ms. Jane Hedges to briefly state her position. She stated that they were wanting to add heat and air conditioning to this room and maybe change out a window to a patio door. That the room has been used as a sewing/storage room for awhile but that they wanted to utilize it more.

Mr. Stebbins asked the city to state their position. Mr. Baier stated that this was a single family residence that was built in the 1920's. The current owners have had this property for some time and it appears that this room has been used in the past for a sewing room and possibly some other uses and it appears that this room has been this way for years and possibly built this way. The door that leads to this room (Mr. Baier at this point passed around pictures of the room and doorway) does not meet the property maintenance code. Staff recommendation on this is that the house was built this way and the room has been used this way for at least 11 years as a sewing room and he doesn't see a major issue with continuing to use this door. Staff recommendation is to allow the doorway to be used as it was originally constructed.

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A general discussion followed. Mr. Fahey stated that to make the door up to code, you would probably need to build a dormer. Mr. Halberstadt asked whether they were going to go ahead with changing out the window to a patio door. Ms. Hedges replied that they were not sure yet. They still needed to check to find out whether the roof over the garage would support them. They haven't gotten that far because they ran into the problem with the door.

Mr. Halberstadt recommended that we take the staff recommendation to allow the variance. He stated that the reason this was brought up was because the owners were trying to do the right thing and he doesn't want to punish someone for trying to do the right thing.

Dick Halberstadt made a motion to allow the variance. Mr. Stebbins seconded the motion. It passed by unanimous vote.

The second item on the agenda was a discussion of the ceiling height. Clay Baier passed around a draft of a policy the building safety division would like to start. Mr. Baier explained that since we have started inspecting single family houses and duplexes which have never been inspected before, they are discovering basements, bedrooms, and attic bedrooms which have been converted years ago that do not meet our seven foot ceiling height requirement. In the past, we have had quite a few appeals meetings with regards to these ceiling heights and it seems that in most instances the recommendation was to approve ceiling heights of six foot eight inches on most occasions. What we are considering doing from staff is to have a policy to allow the use of six foot eight inch ceiling heights as long as they meet the other criteria (egress requirements, windows and the room is large enough). We want to create this policy to eliminate the need for the board to have so many cases. We are bringing it up to hear your opinion on making an internal policy to allow for six foot eight inch ceiling heights. The commentary in the property maintenance code states that the reasons for the seven foot ceiling height are two fold; one is for the volume of air and the second is psychological well being while you're in the room. It doesn't really express any concerns about it being a safety issue. What we would do with our policy is to incorporate that in it. The room would have to have the same cubic feet of air and the six foot eight is an average door height.

Mr. Baier stated that this would be only on existing structures/rooms. Mr. Halberstadt asked if this would be unadvertised. He didn't want people to get the idea that they could go create a room. Mr. Baier stated that no one would be allowed to create a room; it would only be on existing structures. Mr. Welch asked if they would be allowed to remodel with this new policy. Mr. Baier stated that no one would be allowed to create anything new with the lower ceiling height without bringing it to the board to be approved,

Mr. Fahey asked how attic rooms would be counted with a sloped ceiling. Mr. Baier explained the process on how that would be calculated.

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Mr. Baier stated that this does not mean that every six foot eight inch ceiling will be approved. Mr. Halberstadt stated that he did not see a problem with the policy. Mr. Baier stated that the Building Safety manager would also have to approve it and then a memo would go into the file stating that the property had been looked at and it met the criteria.

Mr. Stebbins asked if there were any other issues. Mr. Halberstadt stated that we had a new member. Kevin Fahey introduced himself.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Stebbins made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr, Fahey seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved:

Vivian Petrotte

Don Keeler, Secretary

PMCBA:vp