



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Charlie E. Dissell, Community and Economic Development Director
CC: Ryan Waller, City Manager
Date: March 20, 2020
Re: Updates to Building, Fire, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing, Fuel Gas, Liquefied Petroleum Gas, Energy Conservation and Property Maintenance Codes.

PURPOSE OF UPDATES

As you are aware, one of the items outlined in the City's strategic plan was to review and evaluate current building codes and look at updating to the most recent version of those codes. These codes include the 2012 International Residential Code, 2012 International Building Code, 2012 International Fire Code, 2012 International Fuel Gas Code, 2012 International Plumbing Code, 2012 International Mechanical Code and 2014 National Electrical Code. As you are also aware, Capital Crossroads, through the Central Iowa Code Consortium (CICC), has been working on local government collaboration in the adoption of updated building codes. Last fall, the CICC adopted their final recommendations on building code updates.

REVIEW OF CICC RECOMMENDATIONS

City staff has been working to review the recommendations of the Central Iowa Code Consortium. Beginning last December, staff created a webpage for the public to review the proposed changes and provide feedback. Additionally, on January 16, staff hosted a contractor and developer breakfast to review the proposed changes. The comments that have been received from the public to date are attached to this memo, and all the CICC's recommendations can be found here: <https://www.indianolaiowa.gov/841/Code-Updates>. Through staff review and public comments, staff has identified 2 key areas where a recommendation is being made to not adopt CICC recommendations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the CICC is recommending amendments that would make the requirement for sprinklers more restrictive. For example, the CICC is recommending that if a restaurant is over 1,500 square feet then a sprinkler system would be required. The 2018 International Building Code, as written, requires sprinklers in restaurants over 5,000 square feet. The CICC recommendations for all other enclosed assembly occupancies would halve the floor area/occupancies for sprinkler requirements. Staff is recommending that all amendments to sprinkler requirements made by the CICC not be accepted, and that Council adopt the sprinkler requirements as written in the 2018 International Building Code. As most metro communities have still not adopted the updated building codes, staff further recommends this item be reviewed again in 6 months to examine what CICC recommendations other communities have adopted.

Second, the CICC is recommending amendments that would require stricter compliance to meet an exception of the required fire protection of floors. The 2018 International Residential Code requires that ½" gypsum drywall be installed on the underside of the floor system exposed to the basement. There are various exceptions to this requirement, including the use of dimension lumber, composite

lumber or other approved assemblies demonstrating equivalent fire protection. The amendment proposed by the CICC would require fire performance to be proven by an approved testing company showing at least 26 minutes for length and time of duration for exposure to fire. Staff is recommending that this amendment recommended by the CICC not be accepted, and that Council adopt the requirements as written in the 2018 Residential Building Code. Again, as most metro communities have still not adopted the updated building codes, staff further recommends this item be reviewed again in 6 months to examine what CICC recommendations other communities have adopted.

Additionally, feedback was received regarding storm shelters in schools. Please note that while the City of Indianola did not adopt, storm shelters became a requirement for schools in the 2015 International Building Code, and the provisions were expanded in the 2018 International Building Code. The CICC is recommending an amendment that would delete requirements for mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire separation systems/assemblies in those storm shelters. The proposed amendment would also reduce the required sq. ft. floor area per person. The CICC's recommendation also clarifies storms shelters are not required when buildings/structures accessory to the school are constructed, such as stadiums, concession stands, maintenance garages, etc. Lastly, the CICC is recommending an amendment that would count the installation of portable buildings for educational purposes as new construction thus potentially triggering the storm shelter requirements. These proposed amendments help reduce the cost of construction while still providing a level of safety school occupants and recognizes that weather events experienced in this part of the country are vastly different than other parts. Staff is recommending the CICC recommendations on this section be adopted.

INTERNATIONAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE CODE

Although not part of the CICC's recommendations, staff is also recommending adoption of the 2018 International Property Maintenance Code. While the City does have regulations in place for nuisances and for dangerous buildings, this code would serve as an additional tool for staff to enforce general property maintenance violations on private property. As part of this code, the allowed height of grass needs to be discussed. Like the discussion that took place last year with the number of hours snow can remain before being shoveled, staff also pulled the same cities to see what their allowed height of grass was. The results showed that the average height allowed was over 9.5 inches, while most commonly cities allowed up to 8 inches. The City of Indianola currently allows up to 6 inches. Staff is recommending amending the grass height code to allow for a grass height up to 8 inches on developed lots and up to 12 inches on undeveloped property. The recommendation would require that a 10-foot buffer be provided on undeveloped property adjacent to developed property where the grass is mowed to 8 inches. Furthermore, all undeveloped property would need to have a 25-foot strip mowed adjacent to all curb lines along public roads for vision clearance. As is right now, property owners would be able to appeal to Council for exceptions where prairies, wetlands, or similar areas of naturalized perennial vegetation grasses grown on undeveloped property. If Council concurs with this recommendation, an amendment will also need to be made to Section 50.02.12 of the Code of Ordinances.

TIMELINE GOING FORWARD

Staff recommends Council consider two alternatives.

1. Council directs staff to move forward with the recommendations of the CICC, with the changes/additions noted above, and scheduled first consideration of an ordinance adopting these codes for April 6, 2020. 3rd consideration would occur on May 4, and the new codes would have an effective date of June 1, 2020.
2. Council postpones the study session item to April 20, 2019 for further discussion.