

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 335

EFFECTIVE ~~APPROVED~~ November 1, 2010

WHEREAS, On October 7, 2010 a fire at 417 Charles Street took the lives of a young mother and daughter; and

WHEREAS, Other occupants of the building were able to escape the fire, but the mother and daughter perished from smoke inhalation in a basement apartment; and

WHEREAS, City officials have identified the basement apartment as illegal, meaning that the residence was never approved for legal occupancy; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Inspections and Standards initiated a task force in 2009, the purpose of which was to identify illegal residences, as well as work being performed without proper permits; and

WHEREAS, The work of the task force was halted due to concerns about protocol; and

WHEREAS, Illegal apartments are a chronic problem in the city of Providence, and many of these apartments do not have adequate heating, plumbing, ventilation, or means of egress; and

WHEREAS, Such substandard living quarters pose a serious risk to the health, safety and welfare of Providence residents, and endanger the lives of our most vulnerable citizens; and

WHEREAS, The City of Providence must take every feasible step to prevent tragedies like the recent Charles Street fire.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the City Council of the City of Providence does hereby urge the Mayor's Administration and the Department of Inspections and Standards to establish forthwith a task force to identify illegal apartments, and to ensure such apartments are expeditiously brought into compliance with all applicable building codes for occupancy of dwelling units; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That prior to beginning work all inspectors assigned to the task force shall follow policies and procedures established by the Director of the Department of Inspections and Standards, and such policies and procedures shall require:

- 1) The presentation by inspectors of proper identification prior to entering a property;
- 2) A written and verbal explanation by inspectors as to the purpose of the inspection;
- 3) The use of an inspection checklist for the purpose of identifying any and all violations with regard to illegal dwelling units, a copy of which shall be given to the property owner;
- 4) Extensive training of inspectors on the scope of their authority when entering properties, according to all local, state, and federal laws, as well as training related to effective interpersonal communications; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That upon approval, a copy of this resolution be delivered to the Director of the Department of Inspections and Standards.

IN CITY COUNCIL
OCT 21 2010

READ AND PASSED


PRES.


CLERK

Effective without the
Mayor's Signature:


Anna M. Stetson
City Clerk



November 1, 2010

Mayor of Providence

David N. Cicilline

Providence City Council
Providence City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903


Re: **Resolution on Illegal Apartments Task Force**

Honorable Members of the City Council:

On October 21, the Council passed a Resolution prompted by the tragic deaths of a young mother and daughter in a fire two weeks before. The Resolution urged the establishment of a task force to identify illegal apartments and to ensure that such apartments are expeditiously brought into compliance with applicable building codes. The Resolution went on to detail various policies and procedures that the inspectors assigned to the task force would be expected to follow.

I am returning this Resolution to the Council unsigned, not because this administration has any reluctance to deal directly with the question of illegal apartments, but because there is nothing new here. The Department of Inspections and Standards continues to identify illegal apartments by sending its inspectors out for such purposes. Numerous apartments have been cited as a result. Let me assure the Council that the Department will continue with its ongoing and vigorous efforts to uncover and cite illegal apartments.

Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline
Mayor

City of Providence, Rhode Island 02903
Phone (401) 421-7740 Fax (401) 274-8240