

## Forest Hills Code Enforcement Policy

The goals of the code enforcement program are to ensure the safety of residents, maintain property values, ensure that all commercial and residential properties are consistent with community standards established by council via ordinance and directives and gain compliance by those in violation of borough regulations. To accomplish these goals, the Code Officer shall follow the steps outlined here to the best of his/her ability.

1. First contact with a property owner may be by phone or in person. At that time the property owner shall be informed that this contact will be followed by a written notice of violation within the next 3 days. The written notice shall include:
  - a. A date to comply that is within 14 days of the date of first contact
  - b. A description of the problem
  - c. Notice that failure to comply will result in a second notice sent via certified mail return receipt requested on the 15<sup>th</sup> day.
2. If property owner is not home a door hanger may be used to serve as first contact. The door hanger shall be immediately followed by a written notice of violation within the next 3 days. This notice shall include items outlined in number 1.
3. If compliance is not met at the end of 14 days, a second notice shall be sent immediately via certified mail return receipt requested AND by regular mail. The second notice shall include:
  - a. A date to comply that is within 14 days of the date of the second notice
  - b. A description of the problem
  - c. Notice that failure to comply will result in the issuance of a citation on the 15<sup>th</sup> day.
4. In attempting to gain compliance the code officer shall
  - a. Attempt to make personal contact first either in person, by phone or via a door hanger.
  - b. Take pictures of all violations
  - c. Issue a notice that details each violation and section of the ordinance that is in violation
  - d. If notice of violation is hand delivered but no one is home the notice shall be secured to the door with a picture taken for the record.
5. The code officer shall maintain regular patrol hours via car or on foot to acquire information and note any potential violations. While patrol shall be varied, the code officer shall organize patrol locations to maximize visibility and the opportunity to find potential violations. At least two thirds of the officer's time will be spent in the field.
6. All paperwork shall be handled in the office with only minor paperwork completed while in the vehicle so as to maintain visibility and to seek problem areas.

7. The Code Officer shall maintain a computerized file organized by property of all violators and shall periodically view these properties for compliance. The Code Officer shall maintain a brief written log of daily activities in a computer file that includes
  - a. The date,
  - b. List of activities for the day and approximate time of activity
  - c. All violations noted
  - d. Any other relevant information that may be helpful.
8. The Code Officer shall prepare and file a monthly activity report with council no later than the first of the following month. The report shall be in computer format. The report may be filed with the office secretary for inclusion in a future manager's report. The monthly activity report shall detail:
  - a. The date,
  - b. Address of all properties investigated,
  - c. Violations noted, actions taken at those properties,
  - d. The result of past actions, and
  - e. Any other relevant information that may be helpful.
9. The Code Officer shall attend a council and/or committee meeting monthly to report on activities and answer questions.
10. The code officer shall use the police secretary to assist with and complete written documentation outlined here to maximize the officer's time in the field.
11. Deviations from this policy may be authorized by the Manager or Solicitor when required by law or otherwise deemed to be in the best interests of the Borough.
12. The code enforcement officer may exercise discretion in the enforcement of certain ordinances and regulations such as seasonal violations (e.g., grass and weed violations, snow removal, etc.) as well as regarding those who are considered chronic violators of any borough regulation. Due to their nature, these violations require more immediate action and a quicker response time on the part of the violator. Chronic violators are those who have been notified by the borough multiple times of violations of borough regulations and should no longer be granted a lengthy period in which to comply. Therefore, the code officer may use his/her discretion to expedite enforcement for these types of violations and reduce the time schedule noted in this policy as necessary to gain compliance.

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## Commentary – July 2014

- All documents, logs, letters and other written material (whether hard copy or electronic) shall contain the date it is created or, preferably, shall be date stamped by the officer or one of the office staff members.
- Code enforcement often involves multiple employees over and above the code enforcement officer (e.g., building inspector, zoning officer, arborist, engineer, etc.). Employees shall be brought in immediately as needed with documentation created by the code officer as to procedure and/or the employee involved as to action taken.
  - When a pest situation is involved, the rat control/pest control officer should be brought into the situation immediately to review the condition and make recommendation.
    - If treatment is requested the rat/pest control officer should discuss the treatment with property owners and the code officer prior to taking action
    - Any recommendations to aid in control of such pests shall be made to the property owner, preferably in writing, with those recommendations logged by the code officer or kept on file if in writing.
      - The intent here is to treat the condition, describe the treatment, and to inform the property owner of any actions on their part that contribute to the problem
      - It is the property owner's responsibility to take appropriate action to eliminate the problem if they or their actions are determined to be a cause or to contribute to the condition.
      - The rat/pest control officer may treat the area initially regardless of the property owner's responsibility for or contribution to the problem. However, should the problem continue repeated treatments shall only occur if the property owner eliminates the activity or ceases actions that are contributing to the problem.
    - Unless it is an emergency situation or other factors impact the situation, the rat/pest control officer should inform the property owner in writing with a copy to the code officer.
    - Any and all actions taken should be communicated to the code enforcement officer and logged in the record.
  - When a building related issue is involved, the code officer shall call in the building inspector, electrical inspector, fire marshal and/or other official to review the situation and report to the code officer and property owner on the nature of the problem and possible solutions.
    - All activities should be documented by the officials involved including the code enforcement officer
    - All activities should be summarized and communicated in writing to the property owner.
- In a situation where multiple employees are involved, either the code officer or the building/zoning officer will take the lead in coordination and response based on the issues involved and any permits that may be required. Determination of who shall be the lead official is made based on which issue or issues involved are greater. The borough

manager will determine the lead official if such determination is not obvious under these procedures.

Commentary approved by Planning & Zoning Committee September 9, 2014