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.