

MOUNT PENN BOROUGH  
BOROUGH COUNCIL BUSINESS MEETING  
APRIL 17, 2025

The Mount Penn Borough Council Codes Committee met for a Committee Meeting on April 17, 2025, at Borough Hall at 200 N. 25th Street, Reading, PA 19606. Committee Chair Rick Lombardo called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM and adjourned at 5:39 PM.

Council Vice President Rick Lombardo, Council Member Thomas Baer, Council Member Christine Garcia were present. Staff and Professional Members present were Borough Manager Hunter L. Ahrens, Codes Administrator Arthur Kelly, Jr., and Borough Secretary Elva Lopez.

**Review Presentation By Staff**

The committee reviewed a presentation by staff on the Codes configuration and permit activity for 2024. The presentation included an overview of the different entities involved in inspections and code enforcement, including Central Berks, Systems Design Engineering, Brian Sands (plumbing and mechanical inspector), and Tim Waldman (electrical inspector).

Staff provided a breakdown of the 372 total permits issued in 2024, which was an increase from 233 in 2023. They attributed this increase to economic factors, more home turnovers, and potentially underreporting in 2023. The greatest amount of activity was in property settlements.

The committee discussed discrepancies in permit fees collected versus what was owed, which was attributed to entry errors and penalties for late submissions. They also identified an issue with how Systems Design Engineering (SDE) was labeling zoning and building permits, which was causing confusion in the recording process.

Staff shared that they were still verifying the number of units on rental properties, as some property owners had not fully disclosed this information. The committee discussed the importance of accurate unit counts for proper fee collection and safety inspections.

**Primary Objectives for Borough's Code Activities**

**Rental Activity**

Staff presented data on rental activity for 2024, including 220 property registrations covering 417 residential units. The majority were single units, with 60 being multi-unit properties. Total rental revenue for 2024 was \$49,645.05, with 78.3% collected in the first quarter.

The committee discussed the sustainability of the rental program and the need for accurate unit counts. Staff emphasized that they were verifying unit numbers, as some property owners had not disclosed this information fully.

**Code Enforcement Activities**

Arthur, the code enforcement officer, reported on activities for 2024, including 359 code matters. These included rental inspections, notices of violation, and property warnings. The committee discussed the time-intensive nature of certain inspections, particularly for larger properties.

## **Finances**

Staff presented a breakdown of costs associated with the codes program, including wages for inspectors, enforcement fees, and contracted services. The total cost was approximately \$276,000, with revenue of \$143,000 to offset these expenses. The committee noted that taxpayers subsidized about half of the program's cost.

## **Potential Changes to Accomplish Goals**

The committee discussed several potential changes to improve code enforcement and achieve Borough goals:

- Increasing in-house capabilities: The committee considered having Arthur and his team take on more responsibilities, such as zoning officer duties and some building code enforcement tasks. This would potentially save money and improve efficiency.
- Vehicle for code enforcement: The committee discussed the possibility of leasing a vehicle for Arthur, potentially funded through rental program fees or commercial property inspections.
- Training and certifications: The committee agreed on the importance of sending Arthur and Alex for additional training and certifications to expand their capabilities.
- Improved communication with police: The committee discussed writing a letter to the police department regarding the Crime Free Addendum program to improve information sharing.
- Addressing non-compliant property owners: The committee discussed strategies for dealing with property owners who consistently fail to comply with rental regulations, including the possibility of revoking occupancy permits.
- Fee adjustments: The committee considered adjusting fees to better cover program costs and potentially fund a vehicle for the code enforcement team.
- Streamlining the violation process: The committee discussed potentially eliminating the second notice of violation to speed up the enforcement process.

The committee also addressed specific concerns, such as a problematic tenant who had threatened code enforcement officers and properties with significant maintenance issues. They agreed on the need for a more structured approach to dealing with these situations, including better coordination with the borough solicitor.

The committee concluded by agreeing to schedule a meeting with the borough solicitor to discuss legal strategies for enforcing code violations and addressing non-compliant property owners.