

## **Code Enforcement**

*Joe VanNevel, Director*

Code Enforcement’s mission is to serve the residents of the City of Mishawaka through enforcement of the city ordinances pertaining to public nuisance issues, which are the condition of the property, and substandard issues pertaining to the condition of the structures that are on the property. Code Enforcement’s priority is to keep Mishawaka’s neighborhoods looking clean, attractive, and inviting. This is accomplished by addressing resident complaints and by code officers aggressively patrolling their respective areas. We try to work with residents and businesses to gain compliance without taking enforcement action, such as writing citations or going to a hearing.

Code is staffed by its Director Joe VanNevel, Office Manager Carrie Lytle, and four Code Officers – Cris Campbell, Randy Redman, Mike Carpenter, and Victor Kasznia Jr. with a combined total of 111 years of service to the City of Mishawaka. With this longevity the Code Officers have been able to create a working relationship with residents and landlords. The Code Officers have been able to get faster compliance communicating with landlords and owners via e-mail.

In 2019, a new software program called EnerGov was implemented to record and track Nuisance and Substandard cases. With the implementation, each officer received an iPad which allows the Code Officer to be more efficient and productive and allowing them to remain in the field for most of the working day. The Code team has become more fluent and reliant on this program. There is still some trial and error with the program which still affects the case load numbers for the year.

In close collaboration with the Police Department and Legal Department there has been a great success rate with properties that have been deemed a public nuisance. With properties that have a landlord/property manager, an eviction rate of close to 100% has been achieved. In the last year there were 27 Public Nuisance letters sent out. In 2018 and 2019 there were 32 letters sent.

### **Public Nuisance Violations**

The main public nuisance ordinances that code officers enforce include the following: snow removal, tall grass, accumulated trash/litter, improper storage of building materials and household items, and abandoned vehicles. Overall totals for 2020 were down compared to 2019 due to the challenging year that Covid-19 brought to the Code Team. Compliance was more difficult to achieve, which increased the number of follow-ups and increased the amount spent on mowing, removals, and board-ups. Alleyways were still a focus for the code team.



*124 E Lawrence St. - Before*



*124 E Lawrence St. - After*

Approximately 3,500 nuisance cases were opened. It is important to note that for every case opened by a code officer in 2020, about three to five follow-ups were required to gain compliance, which would be approximately 14,000 follow-ups.

### **Substandard Structures**

The continued implementation of the Top 100 Program helps keep the number of dilapidated structures in the City of Mishawaka to a minimum. Code is now in the fifteenth year of the Top 100 Program, which means 1,500 of the worst structures have been addressed. Structures damaged by fire are monitored to make sure repairs are completed in a timely manner, and if not become included in the program. This program begins in the winter months when the code officers inspect their areas in search of houses, garages, or commercial buildings that need the most attention. In the spring, letters are sent out to the owners describing the issue or issues that need to be addressed.

Code opened 352 substandard cases and conducted approximately 2,100 follow-ups. Code successfully resolved and closed 250 substandard cases, which included 73 of the Top 100 Program. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the residents of Mishawaka turned their attention to improving the exterior of their homes and garages.



*1202 W 7<sup>th</sup> Street - Before*



*1202 W 7<sup>th</sup> Street - After*



*203 Niles Ave. - Before*



*203 Niles Ave. - After*

## **Case Hearings**

In 2020, because of the challenging year, only two Substandard hearings were held. No new cases were added for 2020, and three old cases were closed, which means only two cases remain currently on the docket, with more new cases planned for 2021. These cases involve substandard structures where the owners have made no progress or progress has stopped. Many of these cases get resolved before or shortly after the initial hearing.

## **The Mishawaka Animal Control Commission**

Thirty-three hearings were held in 2020 involving animal permit appeals and violations.

## **Weights and Measures**

Roger Shields is the City's Weights and Measures inspector, on March 19th the COVID-19 pandemic required the State Director of Weights and Measures to suspend small scale inspections in grocery store environments, only allowing spot checks or addressing complaints were permissible. Inspections could resume in May, still forbidding inspectors from visiting heavily populated indoor locations to inspect small scales. Inspectors will continue taking precautions when working in public areas, including wearing gloves when touching fuel dispenser handles. Roger is hoping in 2021 the pandemic will end, allowing him to get back on track with inspections and certifications of all computing scales, prescription scales, package scales and fuel dispensers. Roger inspected and certified a total of 603 devices in 2020.

## **Stewardship**

A total of \$23,755.00 was spent in 2020 for mowing, brush removal, clean-ups, and board-ups by our contractor. The Code Department recouped a total of \$4,524.00 in 2020 for this contracted work.