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Board Matter

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Neighbor to Neighbor

The work of our Code Enforcement agencies (both Strike Team and Zoning/Property Maintenance Enforcement) over the last two years has been significant. Neighbors are seeing the fruits of our hard work and the commitment by this Board. Houses are getting cleaned up one at a time and illegal activity is ceasing as soon as occupants are served papers to appear in court. The judges are supporting our efforts and significant fines are being levied. And – last month – 22 arrests were made in the County’s largest mortgage fraud investigation in our history that included homes illegally set up as boarding houses.

To realize the full potential of this effort, the County must find ways to increase the reach of our Code Enforcement resources. Neighbors and neighborhood associations provide an economical communication resource for our effort. And, beyond that, the neighbors I talk to are clamoring for more information on “neighborhood rules.” The County needs to make this information easily available to both neighbors and neighborhood associations alike.

Madam Chairman, I request without objection that the Board ask staff to:

1. Put code enforcement information in the hands of neighbors and neighborhood associations. Overcrowding information is already easily found on the web. What we need now is easy-to-find information regarding some of the smaller violations that are still a problem and have an impact on neighborhoods. Topics may include but are not limited to: outdoor storage, grass mowing, fence height, blocking sidewalks, parking on the lawn, trash at the curb, inoperable vehicles, and other property maintenance concerns like displaying house numbers.
2. Put this information in several formats that are easy for both neighbors and neighborhood associations to use including:
 - o a “Neighbor to Neighbor” flyer format
 - o a ready-to-cut-and-paste article format like “News to Use”

Attached is an example of a possible “Neighbor to Neighbor” flyer format for staff to use as a starting point. Our over-worked neighborhood volunteers need this type of information in a format that is easy for them to use as a handout or in neighborhood association newsletters.

Currently neighborhood associations have to do much research to figure out what the laws are that pertain to their neighborhood.

This information should be available on the Fairfax County website to the neighbors and neighborhood associations that want to download it and use it. It would **not** replace our active and improved enforcement programs but would provide critical outreach to the community and provide additional communication tools to neighborhoods beyond our established enforcement methods.

I am sure our Office of Public Affairs working with our Code Enforcement officials could improve upon the draft example I have provided. I further ask, without objection, that the Office of Public Affairs work with our Code Enforcement officials to make this “Neighbor to Neighbor” information available to the public in the formats I have described. And because I am asked for this information at every neighborhood meeting I attend, I ask, without objection, that staff come back to the Board with these requested tools no later than the end of this year.