



## INFORMAL STAFF REPORT

### MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Ron Olson, City Manager

**Thru:** Margie C. Rose, Deputy City Manager  
Mark Van Vleck, P.E., Assistant City Manager of Public Works and Utilities

**From:** Gene Delauro, Building Official, Development Services

**Date:** April 8, 2016

**Subject:** Adoption of 2015 International Code Family, 2014 National Electric Code and Significant Revisions to Chapter 14, Article II, Technical Construction Codes

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**Issue / Problem:** In conjunction with the proposed adoption of the 2015 International Code Family and the 2014 National Electric Code, significant revisions to Chapter 14, Article II, Technical Construction Codes are being proposed. The proposed changes streamline administrative, inspection and technical requirements which support the health, safety and welfare of the public. Additional significant changes to the City's technical construction codes are required to support and promote orderly development within the City.

Over 20 meetings and workshop were held throughout 2015 with City Advisory Boards and local stakeholders to include the Building Code Board of Appeal, Mechanical / Plumbing Advisory Board, Electrical Advisory Board, The Builders Association of Corpus Christi, The Associated General Contractors - South Texas and The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Engineers - Corpus Christi.

### **Background and Findings:**

#### **1. Elimination of City Electrical Licensing Program**

The State of Texas began an Electrical Licensing program administered through the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation (TDLR) in 2003. Prior to 2003, the City licensed Electricians as a condition to obtaining permits for work in the City. The City has recognized both licensing programs since the inception of the TDLR program. There are fewer than (25) City licensed Electricians who do not possess a TDLR license. If the City program were eliminated, City licensed Electricians have ninety (90) days to apply to TDLR for a commensurate license with no examination requirement. City ordinance does not require insurance for City licensed Electricians, however TDLR does require insurance as a condition of licensure. In an effort to reduce administrative costs associated with managing two electrical licensing programs and ensure all Citizens can be assured all Electricians maintain minimal insurance, we propose to eliminate the City Electrical Licensing Program.

## **2. Elimination of Re-Out Electrical Inspection Requirement**

City ordinance requires an Owner / Tenant to obtain an electrical permit and inspection as a condition to release electrical service if service has been disconnected for more than 90 days in a commercial building or 180 days in a residential building. The requirement is an impediment for Citizens and businesses moving into existing buildings and we do not believe there is any inherent safety issue present simply because service was de-energized for 90 or 180 days. Only 2 Cities in AEP's Texas service area (378 Cities served) require this type of inspection as a condition to release electrical service. Elimination of the requirement will allow Owners /Tenants to obtain electrical service in a timely efficient manner. City Electrical Inspection staff can be better utilized to meet daily inspection requests for new electrical installations.

## **3. Elimination of 50% Substantial Damage / Substantial Improvement Requirement (Excluding FEMA Requirement)**

City ordinance requires a building Owner / Tenant to bring their entire building up to current Building, Mechanical, Electrical, Plumbing and Fire Code standards if the building incurs greater than 50% damage or if substantial improvements are proposed in excess of 50% of the buildings value as indicated by the Nueces County Appraisal District (NCAD). This requirement, used primarily by federal agencies, is not required by the International Code unless damage or improvements are made to a building located in a flood zone. Unintended consequences occur when a building owner proposes to add an addition to an existing building and the value of the addition exceeds 50% of the value of the existing structure. The unanticipated costs to bring the original building up to current code is an undue financial burden and could cause abandonment of the project.

## **4. New Provision to Register Building Contractors**

City ordinance requires registration of Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing and Irrigation Contractors as a condition to issue permits for construction in the City. The registration database is used to communicate information to registered Contractors in a timely and efficient manner. We are proposing to register all Contractors to include, but not limited to Building, Roofing and Pool Contractor in order to obtain basic information enabling us to build a database of all Contractors working in the City. The database would enable us to efficiently communicate new City and Department policies, information and code determinations in a quick and efficient manner via email. The database could also be used to identify and prequalify Contractors after damaging storm conditions to begin needed repairs. No fee is being proposed for the registration policy.

## **5. New Alternate Wind Load Provisions for Commercial Construction**

City ordinance requires all new Residential and Commercial Projects be designed and inspected for wind load by a State registered Engineer approved by the Texas Department of Insurance (TDI) as a Windstorm Inspector, as a condition to insuring the project through the Texas Windstorm Insurance Association (TWIA) Insurance pool. Not all new Commercial projects require or desire insurance through TWIA. There is no mechanism to allow Owners or Developers who wish to self-insure a project. The alternate provision would allow an Owner or Developer to utilize a State registered Engineer to design and inspect the project in accordance with then current TDI wind load standards for construction without registering the project with TDI. No technical changes or reduction in construction standards for wind load requirements are being proposed. The provision would be limited to new commercial

projects. All new residential projects would still be required to register and follow TDI requirements as a condition for insurance.

#### **6. Elimination of 25% Rule for Foundation Design and Certification**

City ordinance does not require a State registered Engineer to design and certify new or repairs to residential foundations where the area affected does not exceed 25% of the original foundation. Given the high plasticity index of soils in many locations of the City, soils are highly subject to shrinkage / swelling based on moisture content. The International Residential Code recommends foundations on expansive soils be designed to the International Building Code commercial standards. Given this recommendation, we propose to require all new residential foundations be designed and certified by a State registered Engineer.

#### **7. New Provision to Require Licensure for Work on Natural Gas Service Systems**

City ordinance allows an Owner to obtain permits and perform work on their homesteaded residence. Recent events in the City demonstrate the potential effect of a natural gas leak and catastrophic results to persons and property. Issuing permits to unlicensed, untrained persons to install, repair or alter a natural gas service system has the potential to damage not only their property, it could cause damage to surrounding properties as well. The new provision prohibits the issuance of a permit to install, repair or modify a natural gas service system in a residence unless such person is licensed as a State licensed Master Plumber.

**Next Steps:** A staff briefing will be provided to the City Council on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2016 summarizing the proposed changes. An Ordinance will be prepared to adopt the 2015 International Code Family, 2014 National Electric Code and revised Chapter 14, Article II, Technical Construction Codes for City Council consideration on May 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2016.