

Meeting Assignment

Oshkosh Mayor Steve Cummings proposed a new rental registry and housing inspection program for students and elderly residents at the OSA meeting on Tuesday.

“Our goal is to make sure that no matter what you pay in rent, you should have a clean and safe place to live,” Cummings said. “There should be locks on your doors, glass on your windows, and your heat should be on.”

Cummings is working closely with city house inspector, Casey Koelbl to help get the word out about the program. Their goal is to make sure that no matter what tenants pay in rent, the house is a clean and safe place to live.

“We want your help to spread the word about this to get students to allow inspectors in their houses,” Koelbl said.

Oshkosh landlords are threatening tenants with increased rental rates and fees if they report house liabilities to a city inspector. To eliminate the spread of false information, the program will offer free house inspections to those who receive a notice from the city.

Oshkosh landlords are required to register rental properties through the city and are subject to voluntary inspection. Some landlords are threatening increased rental rates and giving false information about the inspection process to discourage tenants from doing so.

Cummings said landlords cannot threaten tenants with this unless they can prove that the renters were the cause of the problem. The program is designed to be a proactive way to ensure that Oshkosh homes are following city codes, without forcing tenants to go through the landlord to get things looked at.

“What inspectors are looking at are things like toilets that flush, lights that go on, outlets that work, windows that close, doors that lock, etc.,” Koelbl said. “We are not looking for drugs or alcohol, we are just looking at your actual house.”

Cummings said the city has worried about unresponsive landlords, after tenants have reported housing issues. Upon inspection, the housing inspectors will contact the landlord with the reported issue, and give them 30 days to fix it.

“We don’t want you to get taken advantage of,” Cummings said. “We want you as student leaders to talk to your fellow students and get them behind this project.”

Koelbl said he was apart of a similar program in Madison last year, and found about six violations per house that were voluntarily inspected.

“Basically, it is a free safety check for you,” Koelbl said. “They cannot threaten you with raised rent or repair cost unless they can prove that you were the cause of the problem.”

Koelbl said one of his biggest concerns is proper heating so that people do not have to have space heaters in their homes.

“A lot of the homes are very large and they are built very close together,” he said. “There is a real threat that if one of these houses were to catch fire, there is a good chance that a lot of them would burn.”

Koelbl said that if renters notice things during the initial walk through of the house, they should make sure its fixed before they move in.

“We also recommend that you take time to record everything you own and everything that was wrong with your house when you moved in,” Koelbl said.

The OSA office manager Lydia Brown asked how renters can make sure to get an inspection notice, if they are afraid or hesitant of calling to make a complaint.

Koelbl said residents who live in a rental property near campus should expect to get a letter from the city sometime this year.

The City of Oshkosh values its residents’ safety and notes that there are good landlords out there.

“We just want to make sure that you all aren't getting ripped off,” Koelbl said.