

Lynn

AGENDA

A Work Session will be held on Tuesday, April 22, 2025
Starting at 5:15 PM
At Sabula City Hall located at 411 Broad Street

MEETING CALL TO ORDER

Meeting called to order by Mayor Hansen

AGENDA ITEMS

Motion to open work session

Discussion regarding ordinance recodification

Lynn Needs to copy + will hand
out at meeting

Discussion regarding post office boxes for rural routes

Discussion regarding boat dock storage

Discussion regarding derelict properties

301 EIK

Discussion regarding homes with no utilities

Motion to close the session

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn.



Troy Hansen, Mayor



Lynn Parker, City Clerk

Ordinance Recodification

I will print out the
Ordinance book w/ the
updates that we have made
ie: rate changes, wording errors, etc

You will need to review +
update / change some of the ordinances
that need updated / revised, etc.

This will be done over a period
of time via work sessions
Our Code Expires in August so we will need
to have a public hearing in July.

Discussion on Mailboxes

Residents along the Yellow Route are classified as being on the rural mail route. As a result, they are required to either rent a P.O. box at the post office or install a mailbox at their residence in coordination with the post office.

The post office has indicated that if we choose to provide mail service along this route, a secure, lockable cluster box would be necessary for these residents. Additionally, if individual mailboxes are permitted, maintenance responsibilities—including snow removal, repairs, and lock changes—would fall on a party other than the post office.

Given these considerations, I recommend that we do not approve individual mailboxes along the rural route within city limits, with the exception of Cottage Street, which is located along the Lower Bluff.



3D



50TH ST

IOWA AVE

BROAD ST

DIVISION ST

ELK ST

CHERRY ST

Sandbar Grill

K&J's Hop'n Shop

SYCAMORE ST

Korner Stop Ice Cream Shoppe

ELK ST

BANK ST 6

BROAD ST

LAKE ST

MADISON ST

42°
AQI 26

Derelict properties

To: Council Members and Mayor

From: Travis Woodhurst

Subject: Follow-up on Property Inspection Process

Lynn, Evan, and I recently spoke with the building inspector from ECIA Craig Elskamp who attended our last council meeting. I asked about the cost of their services, and he informed us that the rate is \$95 per hour, beginning from the time he departs his office in Dubuque.

We also discussed the process for addressing certain properties in Sabula. He explained that he would conduct an on-site inspection and prepare a report outlining any code violations or dangerous conditions. Based on his findings, he may recommend that we consult a structural engineer for further evaluation. The inspector noted that, in general, the inspection for each property should not take more than one day to complete.

Once the report is finalized, we can work with our city attorney to take the appropriate next steps based on the findings.

It's Time: Nuisance Abatement Season Arrives

Mickey Shields, Deputy Director for the Iowa League of Cities. He can be reached at (515) 244-7282 or mickeyshields@iowaleague.org.



Nuisance abatement does not truly have an off-season, but in most communities the need to be more active with nuisance code issues ramps up in the spring months. Violations related to unmowed lawns and overgrown weeds start to appear, and as more folks get outside (including city officials) some of the most challenging issues related to dilapidated or abandoned homes and buildings are more visible.

For veteran and new city officials alike, nuisance abatement activities often seem daunting. In many communities, as soon as one nuisance issue is rectified, three more have appeared. There are also questions over how much city resources can (and should) be used for dealing with nuisance properties, whether that is conducting regular enforcement activities or determining if a city has the wherewithal to take on an abandoned home or downtown building.

While nuisance abatement funding and work can be overwhelming, there are ways for cities to strategically make improvements in their community. City officials can make dedicated plans that prioritize issues to address and identify resources, proactively work with residents and business owners to prevent recurring violations, improve enforcement practices and utilize its powers to help redevelop dilapidated properties.

It Starts with a Strong Foundation

Cities that are successful in nuisance abatement can trace their accomplishment to two key foundational elements: a clear, consistent city code and a thoughtful nuisance abatement plan. To be effective in nuisance code enforcement, a city's actions must be supported by the city code. Chapter 657 of the *Iowa Code* provides the basic framework for nuisance issues and gives municipal governments broad support for local enforcement. That

is helpful, but it is necessary for each city to add local provisions that match the standards of their community.

Not every city is alike and detailed standards provide clarity to local property owners and residents as to what is not allowed when it comes to the condition of their property. Common examples include the acceptable height of grass before it is deemed overgrown or what is considered a junk vehicle. The specific standards in each city's nuisance code become crucial to enforcement. Involving the city attorney is paramount as they can help ensure the city's codes are lawful and actionable.

And, as much as cities work to proactively reduce nuisances, there will be properties in violation of one or more city codes and force a city to take action. This speaks to the need for a clear plan, similar to how cities map out its other routine services, programs and projects.

Like other planning exercises, a review of past nuisance abatement efforts and costs should be studied as a city develops its annual budget. A city incurs expenses in routine nuisance code enforcement and also absorbs costs when conducting abatement when a property owner fails to comply. There are methods in the state code for cities to assess such costs to a property, but there are cases where a property owner does not pay. On top of that, derelict and abandoned homes and buildings often require significant local investment if there are goals to deal with such a property.

It's also wise to make nuisance abatement planning a routine activity to help take stock of recent violations and city efforts to see if there are common problems, ways to become more efficient and ideas for getting ahead of recurring issues. Like any plan, the city should then prioritize the homes and buildings that need the most attention and estimate the costs the city may incur. This should include any properties the city has identified as having potential for redevelopment, along with developers that may have an interest in such a project.

As city officials know, every day can be different in municipal government and that can force attention elsewhere. Developing a good nuisance abatement foundation that is centered on a clear city code and a detailed plan will help a city stay the course throughout the year. It will also help a community work toward goals

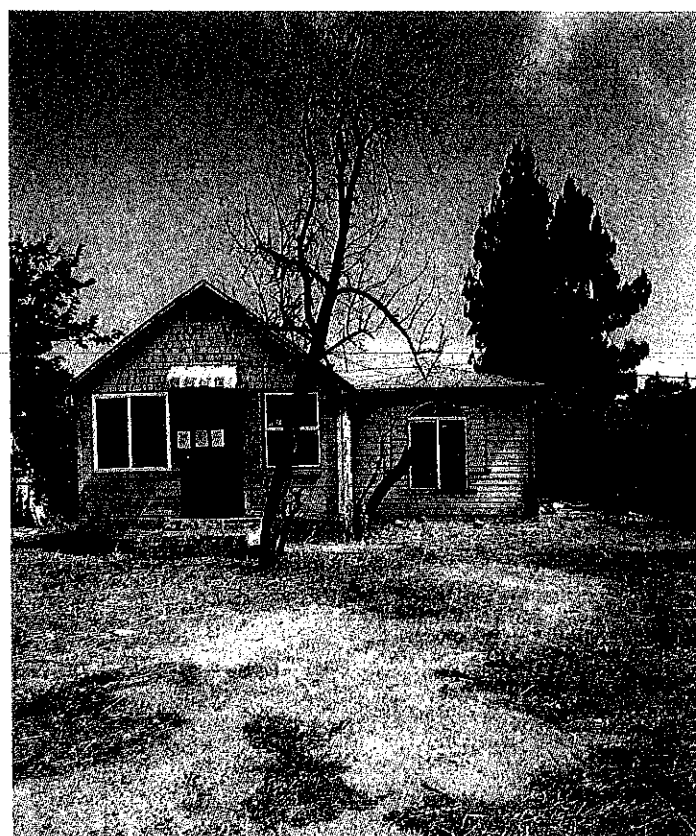
of turning around problem properties and strengthening neighborhoods.

Standard Nuisance Abatement Processes

At the League, we often get questions related to nuisance abatement and one common theme is when a city wants to shift from perhaps a "low enforcement" status to a higher level of enforcement. Understandably, this can be a significant shift for residents as city leaders try to thoughtfully improve enforcement and improve the community.

From a basic standpoint, fair and consistent enforcement of a city's nuisance code is critical and must be done by a city official, or multiple officials, that have a strong understanding of the various provisions of the code. City governments have the ability to authorize who will conduct nuisance code enforcement and while it's not a job that many would describe as "fun", many know it is critical.

Veteran code enforcement officials often share that starting routine violations with an informal process can be quite beneficial and save both the city and the property owner time and expense. Sometimes a quick chat on the phone or



at the door can alert a property owner of a violation they were not aware of, and one that they can quickly remedy that day. In these circumstances, not only can an informal process keep costs down, it can engender trust in the city.

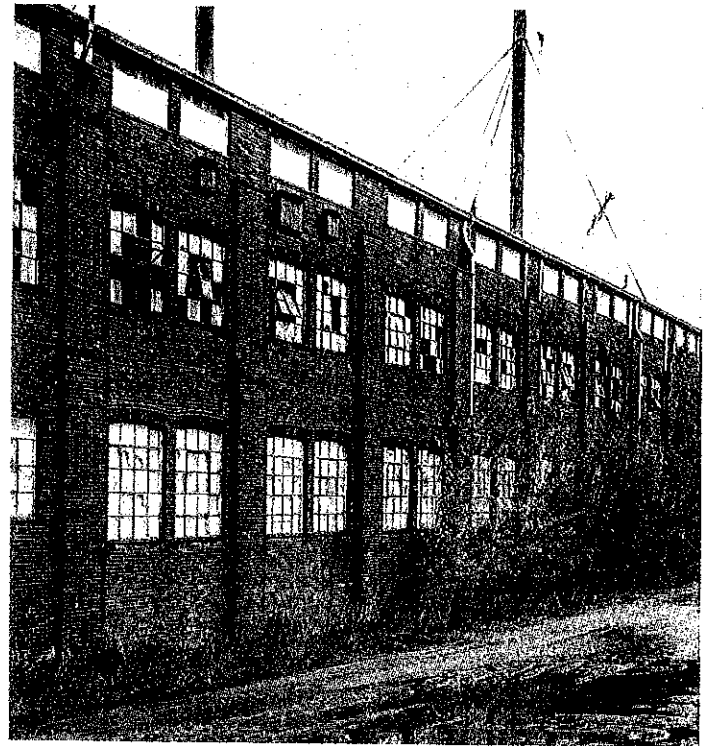
Unfortunately, the informal process does not always work and there are other situations where it does not make sense to try. That leaves a city with the formal nuisance abatement procedures, with the most common ones being the administrative process and municipal infractions. The administrative process is typically used for routine nuisances and often begins with the city sending a formal letter to the property owner notifying them of the violation(s) and setting a deadline for abatement (while also advising of the city's ability to enter their property, abate the nuisance and charge the city's hard costs to the property owner).

Municipal infractions are usually used for more serious violations, such as junk vehicles and dangerous buildings, where more urgency is required. Citing an owner with a municipal infraction places the matter directly in district court and gives the court, among other things, the ability to fine the owner in addition to requiring the nuisance to be abated.

The Heavy Stuff

Occasionally, cities are also confronted with nuisance properties that are well past routine code violations and need specific attention and resources. With more serious nuisance property issues, such as a derelict or dangerous building or house, a city may need to become more directly involved. The same is true with abandoned properties where a city may consider acquiring title through district court, a tax sale or by working with a developer interested in redeveloping the home or building.

This aspect of nuisance abatement is usually the most aggravating as city governments, in many cases, are not well equipped to deal with such properties and would much rather allow private individuals and companies to manage such issues. Unfortunately,



many communities around the state have seen a significant rise in abandoned or derelict properties, most of which sit vacant for years as there is often a lack of interested buyers or anyone else willing to do something with the property.

Dealing with derelict and abandoned properties underscores the need for a strong plan and budget. Yes, these are some of the most difficult situations a city government can face, but the reward of a cleaned up and potentially active property is a great motivator.

Why do we do this? You may hear that question every now and then when doing nuisance abatement work, and it's fair to wonder. It can be tiring work, but it's always important to remember that residents and their elected leaders want a healthy community with strong neighborhoods. «

Learn More at the 2025 Nuisance Abatement Conference

The League's annual Nuisance Abatement Conference will be held Wednesday, May 21 at Music Man Square in Mason City. The day-long event focuses on various aspects of nuisance abatement and offers guidance on improving local efforts. More information and online registration will be available April 14 at www.iowaleague.org.