

Rental Inspection Processes Subcommittee Minutes

May 21, 2026

Key Discussion Topics

1. Code Enforcement Policies & Best Practices

Logan Fire Chief Joe Posey Consultation:

- Met with Joe Posey to discuss code enforcement approaches
- Logan has better, more thorough inspection reports than Athens (per Caitlin's assessment)
- Action: Get copies of Logan's inspection report templates
- Logan's inspection scheduling process seems more efficient
- Joe expressed interest in:
 - Establishing best practices for safe housing
 - Including Athens' code enforcement director in future meetings
 - Has support from his mayor and city council
- Logan uses body cameras for inspections (housed with police department)

Logan's Inspection Approach:

- Primarily complaint-based (no routine mandatory inspections like Athens)
- Review exteriors every other year; wants to do annually
- Would use search warrants if needed for interior issues
- Use administrative citations for exterior violations (lawn, visible issues)
- Landlords have been cooperative with the study
- Code enforcement officers should be certified (best practice recommendation)
- They take extensive photographs during inspections

Fire Safety Concerns:

- Fire safety is critical, especially in multi-unit buildings
- Single-family homes less concerning (windows provide egress)
- Multi-unit buildings uptown lack sprinkler systems (grandfathered in)
- Example: Campus Heights (formerly Carriage Hill) - has numerous violations
- State does primary fire safety inspection during construction; no regular follow-up for older buildings
- Code office consistently checks smoke detectors
- Discussion of whether firefighters could conduct rental inspections (done in some communities)

2. Athens Inspection Issues

Current Problems Identified:

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- Athens does NOT inspect each apartment in multi-unit buildings
- Only sample/audit inspections (couple of units) in large complexes
- This is inadequate for ensuring safety
- Inspection scheduling process is cumbersome
- Need for AI/technology solutions being explored

Legal Challenge - North Canton/Akron Case:

- Lawsuit at Ohio Supreme Court level
- Landlord challenged forced inspections
- Last decision: cannot force entry without an issue
- Question: How do you know there's an issue without looking?
- Action: Need to obtain case number and review decision
- Athens was tested on this 10-15 years ago and "passed muster"
- Inspections may need to be voluntary due to legal constraints

Staffing Concerns:

- Brian (code enforcement officer) planning to retire
- Need to replace it
- Nelsonville eliminated their code enforcement position (Chancey resigned, saw "writing on the wall")

3. Survey Progress

Current Status (as of meeting date):

- **583 tenant surveys** received
- **233 landlord/property manager surveys** received
- Deadline: May 31st
- Feeling positive about response rates

Data Analysis Plan:

Summer Analysis (By August):

- **Erica** (doctoral student in communications) will analyze de-identified data
- Under supervision of Dr. Ben Bates
- Her focus on "tension" between tenant and landlord responses on similar questions:
 - Response times for critical repairs
 - Response times for non-urgent repairs
 - Communication strategies

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- Jennifer will de-identify data by end of June (only research team sees identifiable data)

Fall Semester - Undergraduate Analysis:

- **Dr. Charlie Morgan's** undergraduate research methods class
- Students in groups of 3
- Will use clean data sets
- Tasks: literature reviews, analysis of patterns
- Possibly help with focus group recruitment and support

Fall Semester - Graduate Analysis:

- **Dr. Ani Ruhil's MPA Research students** (Voinovich School)
- Will use quantitative data sets
- More sophisticated statistical analysis expected
- Adds credibility given Voinovich School's reputation

Data Privacy:

- Using Qualtrics through university (not personal accounts)
- Addresses concerns about data handling
- Only research team (Solveig, Jennifer and Jim) will see identifiable information

4. Focus Groups

Planned Structure:

- 3 focus groups planned:
 1. Landlords
 2. Property managers
 3. Tenants
- 6 people per group (approximately)
- Undergraduate students may help with recruitment and note-taking
- Research team will run the conversations
- Questions will be developed based on survey findings

5. Revenue & Budget Analysis

Current Situation:

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- Rental permit fees generate MORE than enough to cover entire code enforcement department

Legal Concern:

- Fees can only approximately cover costs
- Question: What can be done with surplus funds?

Budget Analysis Needed:

- Cost of hiring and training inspectors
- Annual inspection capacity with current staff
- Cost per inspection (current and with new strategies)
- Inspections needed based on best practices
- Cost of re-inspections

Previous Work:

- Steve Pearson developed formula years ago
- David Briggs said formula was missing elements but never clarified
- Action: Contact Steve Pearson for old formula (he "has everything he's ever had")
- Should invite Steve to next meeting with John

6. Technology & Efficiency Solutions

Fire Extinguisher Inspection Innovation:

- Currently: landlords take extinguishers to Klein Welding for annual inspection
- Klein Welding is only local provider (Polini's out of business)
- Proposal: Backflow inspection model
 - Vendor logs inspections directly into city system
 - Similar to current backflow inspection database
 - Could pay Klein Welding small fee per inspection
 - Would eliminate need for inspector to check each one
 - Saves time for both inspectors and office staff
- Action: Rick to write up proposal

iPad/Digital Inspection Tools:

- Joe Posey interested in using iPads for inspections
- Concern: Detailed code citations cannot be done in field
- Proposal: Use iPads for checklist items in field

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- Simple pass/fail for routine items
- Detailed reports compiled back at office
- Data uploads directly to system (like backflow inspections)
- Eliminates duplicate data entry

AI Tools for Inspections:

- Research shows multiple AI tools exist for building inspections
- Can detect issues from photos (cracks, damage, etc.)
- Generate reports connected to code
- Similar to home inspection reports (Florida example: same-day comprehensive report)
- Drone technology available for roof inspections
- Action: Cody to research AI/IT solutions for code enforcement

Current System:

- Described as "like the 1980s"
- Significant room for modernization

7. Workflow & Process Improvements

Proposed Analysis:

- Interview code office staff about current workflow
- Ask: "What would you like to see cut out or changed?"
- Identify barriers and unnecessary steps
- Staff input critical since they do the work daily

Re-inspection Issues:

- Need strategies to reduce re-inspections
- Example: Fire extinguisher system could eliminate one common re-inspection cause

8. Research on Other Models

To Investigate:

- Metropolitan Housing Authority inspection process
- Public health inspection process
- Columbus and other Ohio State University communities
- ICC (International Code Council) standards and best practices

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- Professional organizations' guidelines

9. Proposed Technology & Educational Materials

For Renters:

- Short educational videos (7-8 minutes)
- Topics:
 - Rights and responsibilities
 - How to access information
 - Resources available
- Similar to other university communities' programs
- Could be hosted on OU website

For Landlords:

- Educational modules for new landlords
- Topics:
 - Legal requirements (e.g., proper notice before entering apartments)
 - Software tools available
 - Best practices
- Address common complaints (entering without notice, etc.)

10. GIS Mapping

- Rob Delich working on GIS map
- Will show rental locations and related information
- Visual tool for data presentation

Action Items

Jennifer:

- De-identify survey data by end of June
- Provide data to Erica for analysis
- Send Bob Preeb's and Rick's documents to committee for review (unedited)
- After committee feedback, send to Tom
- Follow up with Tom on citizen service reports (30 days from April 23rd meeting)
- Meet with Dr. Charlie Morgan to discuss class structure and needs
- Coordinate with MPA professor on graduate student analysis
- Contact Steve Pearson about old budget formula

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Rick:

- Write up fire extinguisher/backflow inspection model proposal
- Research ICC and other professional organizations' best practices
- Contact Joe Posey for follow-up meeting
- Look into North Canton/Akron court case on inspection rights

Cody:

- Research AI and IT solutions for code enforcement efficiency
- Explore available inspection technologies

John:

- Provide more detailed revenue analysis
- Calculate costs of current operations vs. proposed improvements

Committee:

- Review Bob Preeb's technology recommendations
- Review Rick's recommendations
- Provide feedback on both before sending to Tom

Meeting Schedule

- **June 18th, noon** - Full committee meeting (1 hour)
- **Skip July** - Summer break, vacation time
- **August** - Reconvene (possibly informal meeting with Joe Posey)
- **October** - Analysis review
- **November** - Report writing begins
- **December** - Present to City Council

Notes on External Partnerships

Joe Posey (Logan Fire Chief):

- Very interested in collaboration
- Wants to include Athens code enforcement director
- Has mayoral and council support
- Will set up follow-up meeting

Dr. Charlie Morgan:

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- Undergraduate research methods course (20 years teaching experience)
- One section, approximately 30-40 students
- Students work in groups of 3
- Will assign tasks related to data patterns
- Students will conduct literature reviews
- May help recruit and support focus groups

MPA Program:

- Graduate-level statistical analysis
- Will use quantitative data/possibly Inspection data
- Adds academic credibility
- Professor is "stats guru"

Key Concerns Raised

1. **Legal vulnerability** of mandatory inspections (North Canton case)
2. **Not inspecting all units** in multi-unit buildings is inadequate
3. **Surplus revenue** creates potential legal/political issues
4. **Staffing reduction** contradicts need for better enforcement
5. **Outdated technology** creates inefficiencies
6. **Fire safety gaps** especially in older multi-unit buildings without sprinklers

Timeline Summary

- **May 31:** Survey deadline
- **End of June:** De-identified data ready
- **August:** Erica's analysis complete
- **Fall Semester:** Student analyses ongoing
- **October:** Compile all findings
- **November:** Draft final report
- **December:** Present to City Council

Edited Minutes based on recording.