

The O·C·E·O·A Enforcer

The Newsletter of the Ohio Code Enforcement Officials Association

Second Quarter, 2009

Code Enforcement during an Economic Recession

Rough economic times are upon us and many communities have experienced decline and depreciation of the housing stock as a result of the shrinking financial system and prevalent foreclosure in previously stable neighborhoods. The objective of enforcement is not only difficult in these circumstances but sometimes appears impossible: our afternoon session will be dedicated to addressing/finding alternative solutions to Code Enforcement during this and future economic recessions.

This presentation has been developed around four key concepts...

1. Our duty/reason for employment is the preservation of neighborhoods and individual community standards through the enforcement of codes and ordinances adopted by our governments. This mission is/continues to be paramount, even in spite of hard economic times, if we are to facilitate the resurgence of our communities and prevent the further deterioration of our individual neighborhoods.
2. Reality of the economic situation (the limited resources of the individual home-owner, and the prevalence of foreclosures and the associated issues of property maintenance and ownership/responsibility) may precipitate the desire of judges and elected officials to look for "Velvet gloves" approaches as alternative to the "Hammer" approach for acquiring compliance. Focusing on corrective measures rather than punitive action to reach/maintain our communities may become a prevailing force in these uncertain times.
3. There are helpful resources out there and we need to find them and explore our ability to utilize and direct violators to these existing programs. We DO NOT need to recreate the wheel – we may just need to get on board.

4. Are there alternative approaches to enforcement that may become a tool for gaining compliance (i.e. Prioritizing violations based on the potential for deterioration and impact on the inhabitants and general public; Accepting a specific level of compliance as alternative to fines and punitive measures; Creating programs and outlets for assisting the landowner through public contractors and recovering costs through assessment or collection.

Some of these key factors/concepts are outside our control as individual enforcement officers and so we have elected to focus more on the development of networks and identifying resources that already exist to address property maintenance concerns. Representatives of the United Way will be spearheading a discussion of these resources and offering some direction on how and where to go for looking for programs and assistance for owners in our own communities.

While we recognize the structures and agencies being discussed are not universal to all areas of the state they may represent specific programs in your community and may serve as examples for your own community to consider initiating. We hope this discussion will result in a more knowledgeable enforcement officer/agency that is willing and able to find resources and bring these resources to bear on the violations and issues facing our communities as a result of these difficult times and economic recession.

NEW TRUSTEES

We had three members expressing interest in serving on the Board of Trustees at the February Meeting. It was too late to include them in the general election but we were able to allow them to fill the two vacant seats on the board through a special vote by the Board at the March Board Meeting.

The new Board Members are Jerry Quinn from Colerain Township and Matt Rice from the City of Massillon.

**Renew Your Membership
or Join Today**

Individual Annual Memberships are still \$25 and Agency Annual Memberships \$250. All Memberships are for a one year period running from February 1, 2009 to January 31, 2010.

The Board also named Lisa Colwell of National Inspection Services Property Maintenance Inspection Consultant at the March Board Meeting.

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SOCIAL SERVICE RESOURCES

Representatives of the Neighborhood Housing Partnership of Greater Springfield will be on hand to present their efforts to facilitate neighborhood stabilization in the face of rising foreclosure rates through its Cultivating Neighborhoods program. As well as discuss options and programs dedicated to home-buyer education, foreclosure prevention, and in-foreclosure counseling; programs to facilitate home repair; and the success and faults of programs and working in an environment of bad mortgages and depreciating neighborhoods.

2009 OCEOA Meeting Dates

- February 12, 2009·
- May 14, 2009·
- August 13, 2009·
- November 12, 2009·

All meetings will be held at the Ramada Plaza on Sinclair Road in Columbus, Toll Free Phone No. 1-877-609-6086



As many of our member communities are or have areas of urbanized development we have asked Gary Comer, Assistant Wildlife Management Supervisor for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to present on the topic of “Wildlife in Urban Environments”. The presentation will devote time to addressing the dangers, habitats, and handling of the larger mammals and other wildlife those enforcement officers may encounter on inspections of residential and commercial structures or that may stimulate questions from the general public. Mr. Comer will discuss the exposure risks for enforcement officers and potential areas and signs of infestation and habitation for these creatures; as well as some preventative measures for removal and/or control techniques for use with these animals. If you have specific questions or animals you wish to make sure are discussed please email Joshua Harmon @ jharmon@ci.springfield.oh.us so we can pass these requests along to our presenter.



You can now download the meeting registration form and copies of the Enforcer by visiting the web site at www.oceoa.org

SPOTLIGHT on OCEOA Blog
Don Tate

Sharing ideas and supporting each other in our profession is one of the primary reasons OCEOA exists. We have tried to make that easier in recent years by fielding requests from members about how others handle a problem or conduct certain activities, etc and then sending out e-mails to the membership asking for responses. Don will demonstrate how to navigate to and through the Blog and instruct us on how to post and respond to questions.

We have now taken that question/solution process to the next level. Last fall we tested a blog (web log) for OCEOA and found it can be a helpful tool and one that is more interactive and viewable by more people than with the former email process. Once the question or topic has been entered on the OCEOA blog, anyone can post comments to that specific topic.

We have now moved our blog and OCEOA website to the same web hosting server so there is a new address for the blog. You can still reach it through the link on the OCEOA website at www.oceoa.org or go directly to the blog by entering blog.oceoa.org (do not enter www.). Once you have entered the site you can subscribe to the blog which means you can receive an email every time a new topic, question or comment is posted. You can choose to comment on a specific topic and, if you prefer, subscribe only to that topic.

Commenting on topics/questions is easy. However, the first time you enter a comment, a confirmation e-mail will be sent to you asking you to confirm your entry. This helps eliminate junk comments on the site.

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