

CODE ENFORCEMENT ORDINANCE

ORDINANCE NO. 275

AN ORDINANCE CREATING AN OFFICE OF CODE ENFORCEMENT AND DESIGNATING A CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER AND A CODE HEARING BOARD AND FIXING CERTAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES RELATIVE TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE VARIOUS CODES AND ORDINANCES AND PRESCRIBING THE PROCEDURES FOR PERMITS: FEES AND APPEALS AND PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS.

BE IT ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Council of the Borough of Freeport, County of Armstrong, State of Pennsylvania, (hereinafter referred to as the Municipality) as follows:

SECTION 1. ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICE OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

- 1.1 Creation of Office of Code Enforcement - There is hereby created by the Council of the Municipality an office of the Municipality to be known as the "Office of Code Enforcement." Said office shall have the responsibility for administering and enforcing the provisions of this Ordinance and of those other codes and/or Ordinances of the Municipality (herein referred to as the "Applicable Codes and Ordinances)", which designate said Office of Code Enforcement as their Official Administration and Enforcement Agency.
- 1.2 Appointment of Code Enforcement Officer - There shall be appointed by the Council of the Municipality, a Code Enforcement Officer who shall be in charge of the Office of Code Enforcement of the Municipality. The Code Enforcement Officer shall supervise such other employees or assistants as shall be necessary for the administration and execution of the responsibilities of said Office, as appointed and approved by the Council of the Municipality. Said Code Enforcement Officer and other personnel may consist of employees directly hired and compensated by the Municipality.
- 1.3 Fire Chief - In accordance with the Fire Prevention Code of the Municipality, the Fire Chief of the Municipality has been established as the authorized representative of the Office of Code Enforcement of the Municipality having all of the duties for enforcement of the Fire Prevention Code of the Municipality provided for in this Ordinance. The Fire Chief shall continue to serve in this capacity until such time as Council declares otherwise.
- 1.4 Relief from Personal Liability - The Code Enforcement Officer or other official or employees shall not, while acting for the Municipality, render himself liable personally because of any act or omission as required or permitted in the discharge of his official duties. Any suit instituted against such Code Enforcement Officer, official, or employee, because of any act performed by him in the lawful discharge of his duties, shall be defended by the Solicitor of the Municipality and in no case will said officer, official, or employee be liable for costs in any action, suit or proceeding.
- 1.5 Official Record - An official record shall be kept of all business and activities of the Office of Code Enforcement and all such records shall be open to the public for inspection at all appropriate times, except that no individual, owner, operator, occupant, or other person shall be subject to unwarranted invasion of privacy and except that all evidence or information obtained in the course of any inspection shall be considered privileged information and shall be kept confidential. Such evidence or information shall not be disclosed except as may be necessary in the judgment of the Code Enforcement Officer for the proper and effective administration and enforcement of the provisions of this Ordinance and shall not otherwise be made public without the consent of the owner, occupant, operator, or other person in charge of the unit, structure, or premises inspected.

SECTION 2. DUTIES AND POWERS OF CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICER

- 2.1 Enforcement of Code Enforcement Officer-The Code Enforcement Officer shall enforce and administer all of the provisions of this Ordinance and of those other Applicable Codes and Ordinances which establish the office of Code Enforcement as their official administration and enforcement agency.
- 2.2 Duties of Code Enforcement Officer-The duties of the Code Enforcement Officer shall include the receipt of applications, the issuance of permits, notices, certificates, and orders, the making of inspections to determine conformance with Applicable Codes and Ordinances, the undertaking of systematic inspection programs, the undertaking of research and investigations, the recommendation of appropriate administrative rules for review and adoption by the Code Hearing Board, the keeping of records, the issuance of written annual reports and such other activities as may be required.
- 2.3 Right-Of-Entry-In the discharge of his duties the Code Enforcement Officer or his authorized representative, upon showing proper identification where requested, is hereby authorized to enter and inspect, between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., any structure or premise in the Municipality to enforce the provisions of this Ordinance and of those other Applicable Codes and Ordinances. The assistance and cooperation of all other municipality officials, including police, and fire departments, shall be available to the Code Enforcement Officer to assist in the performance of his duties and in securing right-of-entry.

The Code Enforcement Officer and the owner, operator, or occupant, or other person in charge of any structure or premises subject to the provisions of this Ordinance may agree to an inspection by appointment at a mutually convenient time.

The owner, operator, or occupant or other person in charge of any structure or premises shall give the Code Enforcement Officer entry and free access thereto and to every part of the structure or to the premises surrounding the structure.

If any owner, operator, occupant or other person in charge fails or refuses to permit entry and free access to the structure or premises under his control, or to any part thereof, with respect to any authorized inspection, the Code Enforcement Officer may, upon a showing that probable cause exists for the inspection may file a complaint and may petition for and obtain an order directing compliance with the inspection requirements of this Ordinance from a court of competent jurisdiction. Any person who refuses to comply with such an order issued pursuant to this section shall be subject to such penalties as may be authorized by law for violation of a court order.

SECTION 3. PERMITS, CERTIFICATES, AND FEES.

- 3.1 Permit Required -An application for a permit shall be required in accordance with the provisions of those Applicable Codes and Ordinances which the office of Code Enforcement has the responsibility to administer. Said application shall be submitted in such form as may be prescribed by the Code Enforcement Officer and shall be accompanied by any required fee.
- 3.2 Action on Application-The Code Enforcement Officer shall examine said application to determine compliance with those other Applicable Codes and Ordinances of the Municipality and shall, within 30 days after filing, either approve or reject said application. If said application is rejected, the Code Enforcement Officer shall inform the applicant in writing, stating the reasons for such rejection.
- 3.3 Required Fees -Applicants for permits required by any of the following Applicable Codes and Ordinances shall pay, at the time of application, to the Code Enforcement Officer, for use by the Municipality, fees according to the following schedule:

FIRST: 1000.00 of new construction-\$5.00
\$1.50 per every 1000.00 new construction thereafter.

All permits granted under any of the above Applicable Codes and Ordinances shall be good for a period of six months, provided that extensions may be requested in writing and such extensions may be granted by the Code Enforcement Officer for good reason; except that any permit granted for demolition activities shall be valid for six months only and if such demolition work is not completed within that time, any Bond posted by the applicant shall be forfeited.

3.4 Certificates-The following Certificates shall be required in accordance with the provisions of those other Applicable Codes or Ordinances which the office of Code Enforcement has the responsibility to administer. Said Certificates may be issued separately or combined in the form of a single Certificate.

- a. Certificate of Use and Occupancy-In accordance with Section 120.0 of the BOCA Basic Building Code, a Certificate of Use and Occupancy shall be required, and no new building or portion of an existing building which is enlarged or altered, shall be used or occupied in whole or in part, until such a Certificate of Use and Occupancy shall have been issued by the Code Enforcement Officer.
- b. Certificate of Approval-A Certificate of Approval shall be required for any electrical or plumbing work completed under the provisions of the Applicable Codes and Ordinances. All applicants shall apply to the Office of Code Enforcement for such a Certificate of Approval within 30 days of the completion of the building, structure, work, or premises.
- c. Other Certificates-Any other permits, certificates or licenses, as required by the Applicable Codes and Ordinances shall be obtained by the applicant in accordance with the provisions of said Applicable Codes and Ordinances. Application for such permits, certificates, or licenses shall be made to the Code Enforcement Officer.

SECTION 4. VIOLATIONS AND PENALTIES

4.1 Procedure In Case of Violations--Whenever the Code Enforcement Officer determines that there are reasonable grounds to believe that there has been a violation of any provision of this Ordinance, or of the other Applicable Codes and Ordinances, or of any rules and regulations adopted pursuant thereto, he shall proceed as follows:

a. Serve notice in writing of the alleged violation which shall be signed by the Code Enforcement Officer or his authorized representative. Said notice shall be served personally to the responsible owner, occupant, operator, or other person in charge; or served by registered mail with a return receipt requested; or where such responsible person in charge cannot be found, service may be made by posting a notice in or about the structure or premises or by publishing such notice in a newspaper of general circulation for a period of three consecutive days; or served by any other method authorized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

b. Said notice shall include a statement of the reasons why the notice is being issued, the sections of the Code and/or Ordinances which have been violated, and the remedial actions required.

c. Said notice shall allow a reasonable time not to exceed sixty days, for the initiation and correction of the violation alleged or of the remedial actions required except where emergency conditions exist which require immediate corrective action.

d. Said notice shall contain a statement indicating that the notice will become an order if no request and approval for an extension of time is made to the Code Enforcement Officer or if no petition for an appeal or hearing is requested before the Code Hearing Board within 15 days from the receipt of said notice.

e. The Code Enforcement Officer may grant a request for a reasonable extension of time where he has evidence to believe that the responsible person is attempting to remove the alleged violation. However, no such extension of time may exceed a period of 90 days unless authorized by the Code Hearing Board upon appeal of the responsible owner, operator, occupant, or other person in charge.

4.2 Penalties - Any person who fails to correct a violation or institute a remedial action as ordered by the Code Enforcement Officer or who violates a provision or fails to comply with any requirements of this Ordinance or of any of the other Applicable Codes or Ordinances shall be subject, for each violation, to a fine of not less than \$15.00 or more than \$300.00 and costs of prosecution; and in default of payment of such fine and costs to imprisonment not exceeding 30 days and each day's failure to comply with any such provision or requirement or any such order shall constitute a separate offense.

The imposition of the penalties, herein prescribed shall not preclude the Solicitor representing the Municipality from initiating, and he is hereby ordered to initiate, appropriate actions or proceedings at law, or in equity, to affect the purposes of this Ordinance.

4.3 Dangerous and Unsafe Conditions and Structures and Dwellings Unfit for Human Habitation - Structures which contain dwellings which are unfit for human habitation, or structures which are dangerous or unsafe and structures, which contain dangerous or unsafe and structures which contain dangerous conditions or materials, as defined by the Applicable Codes and Ordinances of the Municipality are hereby declared to be a public nuisance.

a. General Procedure - The Code Enforcement Officer shall order the responsible owner, operator, occupant, or person in charge of the structure or premises which are dangerous, unsafe or unfit for human habitation to vacate, repair and/or demolish said structure and to remove the public nuisance as provided for in this Ordinance and in the Applicable Codes and Ordinances of the Municipality in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

b. Failure to Comply - Whenever an order to vacate, repair, and/or demolish a structure which is a public nuisance because it is unsafe, dangerous, or unfit for human habitation has not been complied with, the Code Enforcement Officer, may in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, proceed to cause the structure to be vacated, repaired, and/or demolished or take such other action as is necessary to abate the nuisance. Abatement under this section shall not commence until at least ten days after the service of the order, except that the Code Enforcement Officer may determine that more immediate action is required because of the special emergency or dangerous conditions which exist.

c. Recovery of Expenses - The expenses incurred pursuant to Section 4.3b of this Ordinance and of the other Applicable Codes and Ordinances shall be paid by the responsible owner, operator, or occupant, or by the persons who caused or maintained such a public nuisance.

The Code Enforcement Officer shall file on his records an affidavit stating with fairness and accuracy the items and date of the expenses incurred. The Council of the Municipality may institute a suit to recover such expenses to be charged against the property as a lien.

SECTION 5. VARIANCES AND APPEALS

5.1 Code Hearing Board - There is hereby established a Code Hearing Board, appointed by the Council of the Municipality consisting of not less than three members nor more than five members who shall serve without compensation, but may be reimbursed for necessary and reasonable expenses. Their term of office shall be for three years, except for those first appointed, so fixed that the term of office of at least one member shall expire each year. Appointments to fill vacancies shall be only for the unexpired portion of the term.

5.2. Powers of the Code Hearing Board -The Code Hearing Board shall have the following powers and duties:

a. Interpretation-On appeal from a determination of the Code Enforcement Officer or on request of any Municipal Official, the Code Hearing Board shall decide any questions involving the interpretation of any provision of this Ordinance or of those other Applicable Codes and Ordinances.

b. Variances -The Code Hearing Board may grant a variance from the strict application of this Ordinance or of those other Applicable Codes. Such variances may be granted only in those cases which would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship and where the public health and safety shall not be jeopardized.

c. Decide Appeals -The Code Hearing Board shall hear all appeals made to it and, depending on its findings, shall decide whether such appeals shall be granted.

5.3 Requests for Appeals or Variances-Any person requesting a variance or aggrieved by a decision of the Code Enforcement Officer or by any other employee or official charged with the administration and enforcement of this Ordinance and of those other applicable codes or ordinances, may take an appeal to the Code Hearing Board. All appeals shall be made in writing stating the grounds upon which the appeal is based and shall be transmitted to the Office of Code Enforcement. An appeal must be taken within 15 days of the action or of the receipt of written notice of any decision or ruling which is being appealed.

5.4 Appeals and Variance Procedure-

a. Public Hearing-The Code Hearing Board shall meet and conduct a hearing within 30 days of the receipt of an appeal or a request for a variance. All hearings shall be public and all persons whose interest may be affected shall be given an opportunity to be heard. A record shall be kept of all evidence and testimony presented at the hearing.

b. Decision of the Board -All decisions of the Board shall be in writing and a copy of each decision shall be sent to the applicant and to the Code Enforcement Officer. The Code Hearing Board shall also retain in its files a copy of each decision, which files shall be available for inspection by the public. Each decision shall set forth fully the reasons for the decision of the Code Hearing Board and the findings of fact on which the decision was based. The Code Hearing Board shall make an order on its decision and the Code Enforcement Officer shall take immediate action to carry out said order.

5.5 Appeals from the Decision of the Code Hearing Board-Any person or persons aggrieved by any final order or decision of the Code Hearing Board may appeal such order or decision within 30 days, to the Court of Common Pleas in accordance with, as far as practicable, the Rules of Civil Procedure of the Supreme Court regarding appeals from administrative agencies.

5.6 Reports by the Code Hearing Board-The Code Hearing Board shall report to the Council of the Municipality periodically, at intervals of not later than 12 months. The report shall summarize all applications and appeals made to it since the last report and shall contain a summary of the Board's decision on each case. A copy of the report shall be filed with the Code Enforcement Officer. The Code Hearing Board may also submit to the Council of the Municipality advisory reports recommending changes and modifications in this Ordinance or in those other Applicable Codes or Ordinances.

SECTION 6. GENERAL PROVISIONS

6.1 Saving Clause-Nothing in this Ordinance shall be construed to affect any suit or proceeding now pending in any court, or any actions required, or liability incurred, or any clause or clauses of action accrued or existing under any act or Ordinance repealed hereby. No right or remedy of any character shall be lost, impaired, or affected by this Ordinance.

- 6.2 Validity-The invalidity of any section or provision of this Ordinance shall not invalidate other sections or provisions thereof.
- 6.3 Conflict of Ordinances-Any Ordinance or part of Ordinance conflicting with the provisions of this Ordinance, be, and the same is hereby repealed, insofar as the same affects this Ordinance.
- 6.4 Short Title-The Ordinance shall be known and may be cited as the "Code Enforcement Ordinance of the Municipality".

Ordained and enacted into a law this 18th day of
April in the year 1977.

MUNICIPALITY

Geno Pernazza
BY: Geno Pernazza, Pres. of Council

ATTEST:

Ailene Yerace
BY: Ailene Yerace, Ass't Secretary.

Approved this 18 day of April 1977

James A. DeBlasio
BY: James A. DeBlasio, Mayor