



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF INSPECTIONS, LICENSES AND PERMITS

3430 Courthouse Drive ■ Ellicott City, Maryland 21043 ■ 410-313-2433

Robert J. Frances, P.E., Director
bfrances@howardcountymd.gov

FAX 410-313-3298
TDD 410-313-2323

Date: March 22, 2019

To: Lonnie Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer
Department of County Administration

From: Robert Frances, P.E., Director *Robert J. Frances*
Department of Inspections, Licenses, & Permits

Subject: Testimony Regarding Adoption of 2018 Building Codes, 2018 International Plumbing Code, and 2018 Property Maintenance Code for Rental Housing

The Department of Inspections, Licenses, & Permits has proposed legislation to adopt the 2018 version of the Howard County Building Code. The intent of this legislation is to update the model codes used as the basis of the Howard County Building Code, to the most recent editions. This will keep Howard County up to date with the latest codes and standards that are being used in the construction industry. All the codes that are proposed can be viewed online with links provided on the Howard County website.

This adoption will include the 2018 editions of the following model codes; International Building Code, International Residential Code, International Plumbing Code, International Energy Conservation Code, International Mechanical Code, and the International Property Maintenance Code scoped to apply to rental properties. The amendments as proposed enable us to stay current with the most up to date construction codes and allow us to maintain our current construction practices.

The most significant amendments are:

- 1) Require existing homes that make alterations or additions exceeding 50% of the existing house square footage to be provided with a residential sprinkler system.
- 2) We have a permit fee exemption for County-related projects. Currently the exemption applies to projects owned AND operated by the County. We propose to change the “and” to an “or” in the code to address the leased properties the county is obtaining, to make sure they continue to be exempt from permit fees.
- 3) There have been issues with people purchasing properties and doing renovations to flip and resell the property. Many times, they are unlicensed and don't have the experience to do the work themselves. We have seen issues with the removal of load bearing walls that have created severe structural issues, as well as electrical and plumbing nightmares. We want to restrict exemption from licensing to a homeowner's primary residence only.

- 4) On May 15, 2018, our Plumbing Advisory Board, approved us to move forward with the adoption of the 2018 International Plumbing Code (IPC) from the 2009 National Standard Plumbing Code, Illustrated, along with the proposed amendments. The State of Maryland Board of Plumbing had also previously voted unanimously to adopt the IPC as the basis of the State Plumbing Code. The adoption of this code reduces the number of local amendments needed because the new code adequately addresses items that previously had to be addressed via a local code amendment.
- 5) The Property Maintenance Code for Rental Housing has not been updated since 2006. This adoption is to update the model code used as the basis of this code to the 2018 edition of the International Property Maintenance Code. There are no significant changes with this adoption. In fact, several previous amendments have been eliminated because they are now part of the model code. The amendments being proposed are so the county can maintain current practices.

If you have any questions, I can be reached at extension x3946.

Cc: Don Mock, P.E., Chief of Plan Review
Jennifer Sager, County Administration