

**MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
THREE-MEMBER ELECTRICAL PANEL HEARING
of the
BOARD OF BUILDING REGULATION EXAMINERS AND APPEALS**

MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY

October 9, 2013

1. **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL:** The meeting was called to order at 1:03 pm. by Chair Looney.

Board Present

Serena O'Donnell
Tom Looney
Skipp Bringmann

Staff Present

Sharen Walsh
James Gray
Brian Dean
Yvette Jaegge

Public Participation

Patricia Dam, King's Court Apts

2. **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

Staff gave a short presentation outlining the case before the panel. The appeal was a request to waive the municipal code requirements for providing minimum decibel levels for fire alarm notification devices in an apartment building. The appeal was a request to waive the requirement to repair or replace a deficient fire alarm system that was shown to have insufficient audibility.

Chair Looney swore in Appellant. The appellant presented her case and explained the panel should approve the appeal because she provided 85 decibel smoke detectors in each unit as a backup to the fire alarm as well as a security system that allows the manager to access each unit in the building. The building also has fire dams and fire doors. She stated the fire alarm upgrades proposed by Yukon Fire Protection are unacceptable because they jeopardize the fire safety of the building. Mr. Bringman asked the appellant how the proposed upgrades would compromise the fire safety of the building. The appellant said Yukon Fire Protection proposed to drill holes in the 5/8 inch sheetrock to run wires to each bedroom and that was unacceptable. Chair Looney explained for quite some time both smoke detectors and a fire alarm system were required to be in apartments. Ms. O'Donnell asked questions of staff about the availability of records for the original installation of the fire alarm system. Staff responded that records were not located

Staff presented their case and explained the appeal should be denied because current locally adopted amendments to the 2009 International Fire Code require existing apartments to provide a minimum of 65 decibel sound pressure level for fire alarm notification devices. Detailed decibel test reports done by Yukon Fire Protection indicated sound pressure levels far below the 65 dBA. Fire Inspector Yvette Jaegge properly gave the owner notice of the violations and required corrections through several fire inspection notices. Staff indicated that through the locally adopted amendments the minimum decibel level standards of the 2009 International Fire Code were already reduced for existing buildings. Staff emphasized that it is important to note the standard Anchorage has set and for the safety of the occupants of these dwellings the requirement to maintain a minimum 65 dBA level should be upheld. The panel asked questions for several minutes.

The appellant was given an opportunity to give a rebuttal. The appellant admitted the sound level in many bedrooms was very low but said there were many others that were in the 50 or close to 60 dBA range. She would like to work with the existing system and was willing to work with the fire department. Several more questions were asked.

3. PANEL COMMENTS/DECISION:

The Chair summarized the appeal then the panel voted. The panel's unanimous decision is they are not in favor of supporting the appeal. Ms. O'Donnell commented the reason she could not support the appeal was because it was a matter of the life safety and the majority of the units tested at less than 65dBA. She stated she heard the Fire Department is willing to work with her regarding timelines. The fire alarm system appeared young enough that can be worked with rather than putting in a new system. In her experience it is a common and acceptable practice to punch holes in drywall and use fire caulk. Chair Looney re-iterated it was a life safety system and their desire was just to keep people safe

Ms. Dam commented she does not generate enough profit to fix the fire alarm and would file in Superior court for relief and left.

4. **ADJOURNMENT:** Meeting adjourned at 1:41 p.m. **Ms. O'Donnell moved to adjourn. Mr. Bringmann seconded. Unanimously Approved.**