



For Immediate Release

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Answers to Questions Regarding Maintenance and Construction Projects in the City of Olean

May 22, 2014--Olean—Summer time is quickly approaching. It is the season for longer and warmer days, as well as lawn mowers and home repair projects. William J. Aiello, Mayor of the city of Olean, would like to remind residents of some of the city's policies and address some of the questions that have been asked.

"I have had a number of inquiries from our residents concerning the necessity of obtaining permits from our Codes Enforcement Office for regular home maintenance," Mayor Aiello stated. "In addition there are some misconceptions regarding the consequence of home maintenance on the assessed value of a home. It is time to clear the air."

"A building permit is required for structural changes and new construction," said Captain Ed Jennings, Code Enforcement Officer. "Projects such as deck and porch additions, re-roofing, foundation repairs, demolitions and sheds larger than 100 square feet in size would need a permit. As would installations of new electrical service, new heating units or a solid fuel stove. A permit is required in these instances to protect the property owners. Our department has procedures to make sure that the construction is built according to specifications, that current zoning laws are met, and that the contractor is properly licensed and insured."

"There are many projects that do not need permits," Captain Jennings added. "Examples include fences, siding, house painting, as well as gutter and downspout replacement. Replacement windows generally do not need a permit; however, if there are structural changes when a window is replaced, a permit would be necessary. When in doubt, it's probably a good idea to call our office at 716-372-5683."

As for the cost of a permit, they generally run at \$35.00 plus \$4.00 per thousand of building cost which includes material and labor.

Nancy Champlin, the city's Assessor, addressed the question regarding the assessed value of a home following a construction project. "Routine maintenance and repairs needed to keep property in good condition will not trigger an increase in the assessed value of a home," said Mrs. Champlin. "This would include projects such as painting, removing and replacing rotted wood in steps and porch decking, re-roofing, window and door replacement, as well as new furnace and hot water tank replacement."

“On the other hand,” she added, major renovations that increase the value of the home may trigger an increase in assessed value. This would include jobs such as porch removal and replacement, additions to the home, new kitchens and baths, sheds larger than 150 square feet, in ground pools or a total exterior upgrade, for example when the project includes a whole house being sided with vinyl.”

“In general, maintenance and repair work to replace items that have come to the end of their useful life and are necessary to retain the present value of the property, will not increase the assessment,” Mrs. Champlin summarized. “However, renovations and additions that upgrade the condition of the property would result in an increase in property value.

Mayor Aiello also wanted to remind residents that the City has a grass ordinance in effect from May 1 until October 15 which states that the grass shall not exceed eight inches in height. The Code Enforcement Office has the authority and power to enforce the ordinance and will notify the owner in the event of a violation.

In addition clippings and other yard debris are not to be disposed of in the street. According to Tom Windus, Director of the city’s Department of Public Works, “The city barred debris from the street because it ends up filling our storm sewer system. Unfortunately this can lead to localized backups and possibly flooding of the streets.”

“I hope this clears up any misunderstandings that Olean residents have about the City’s policies,” Mayor Aiello said. “I have heard a number of times that people do not want to do routine maintenance on their home because of high permit fees and that the project will trigger an increase in their assessments leading to higher taxes. This is not the case. If residents have questions, please call my office and we will help you find the answer to your question.”

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