

Hills tightens building occupancy rules

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

City policy on issuing temporary certificates of occupancy to builders is now expected to be followed more closely.

As of May 1, any city departments involved in issuing temporary certificates of occupancy will be forced to meet new guidelines, based on a general policy that TCOs are to be issued "only for good and reasonable cause."

The new guidelines were promised by city administrators after it came to light that employees were not adhering to a 1988 policy prohibiting the issuance of TCOs.

"These are written so they can be generally applied," city manager William Costick said. "We feel these will work, yet establish some parameters everybody will be able to deal with."

In March, Farmington Hills resident Luella Hempel turned the spotlight on TCOs and city employees'

inconsistency in following the June 1988 policy. When the policy was established, the city was booming with building activity.

Hempel had obtained a copy of a memo from Costick, requested by Mayor Terry Sever, regarding a 2-year-old TCO on councilman Ben Marks' office building at 2514 Orchard Lake Road, in the shadow of city hall.

AS PROMISED, city officials continue to monitor Marks' TCO. Marks

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in time for "reasonable occupancy." TCOs could also be granted when the size or nature of developing the building makes deferral of occupancy unreasonable.

APPEALS OF the strict enforcement of the new guidelines may be made in writing to Dale Countegan, planning and community development director.

Portions of multi-tenant projects, such as large offices, commercial or multiple housing buildings, may receive a TCO before the entire project is completed, but not for longer than six months.

"In no case shall a multi-tenant project be occupied by greater than 50 percent without receiving a final certificate of occupancy on the whole, common areas and site," the guidelines say.

In multiple housing projects, for example, each building will be handled as a separate structure. As with other types of buildings, a TCO cannot be issued for longer than six months unless the phased development has been approved in advance. Again, each phase must be completed within six months, according to the guidelines.

said he has two remaining items to be completed.

"TCOs are a way of life in every community in Michigan. It is nothing new," Marks said.

Most TCOs are issued for unfinished work around the building's exterior, not the interior. TCOs allow developers to occupy the building while still completing items that don't affect the safety of occupying the structure. Most developers handle the remaining items within one building season, according to a report given to the council two weeks ago.

Though some builders, such as Marks, have had long-outstanding TCOs, the new guidelines limit prob-

it issuance of one for more than six months. Following that time period, the city will take the builder to court if work is not complete, Costick said.

"I think six months is a reasonable outside figure," Costick said, adding that it provides builders with plenty of time to outlast weather problems.

TCOs will be issued, in writing, at the request of the builder, who generally holds a construction permit for the building that needs completing. The TCO must be accompanied with a list of outstanding items and completion dates, according to the new guidelines.

Under the guidelines, TCOs should only be granted when weather conditions prevent completion of a project

State House passes measure to help track stolen gems

A bill to help police agencies track down stolen gems or precious metals unanimously passed the Michigan House April 27, announced the sponsor, state Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills.

House Bill 4105 will require gem dealers to hold the items nine days before selling, instead of the current seven days. The bill now moves to the Senate.

"The extra two days will allow lo-


cal police agencies additional time to check whether the gems have been reported stolen," said Dolan, whose district includes Bingham Farms, Franklin and Beverly Hills.

"The bill also allows any police agency access to fingerprints taken at the time of the sale of the gems or minerals. As it now stands, only the police departments where the sale takes place have a legal right to the fingerprints."

In addition, the legislation requires a fourth copy of the transaction.

"One copy must go to the dealer, one to the seller and one to the police agency where the sale is being held," Dolan said. "At the request of law enforcement officials, we have stipulated a fourth copy, which will be sent to the police agency where the seller lives."

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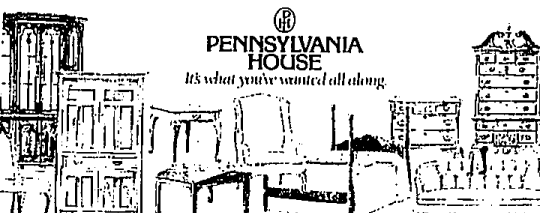


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