

Atchison to increase code enforcement efforts

(KAIR)--“It’s not about generating revenue. It’s about improving the quality of life for Atchison residents.” Those are the words of Atchison Assistant City Manager Joe Warren in a release regarding the City’s plan to embark on increased code enforcement efforts.

According to the release, “the City [of Atchison] is looking to partner with residents to address housing issues in response to recent feedback from the 2021 Community Survey,” the same survey that led to the City’s decision to hold a voter referendum to decide a 1-percent sales tax primarily to fund infrastructure improvements. This time, the survey is cited by the City in noting that “only 23% of residents were satisfied with City enforcement of home/property maintenance issues, and 63% think the City should increase efforts to ensure private property is well maintained.”

To make that happen, the release explains that City Code Enforcement Officer Curtis Wheeler “is asking residents who receive letters from his office to engage so that a solution can be found.” Wheeler, in the release, tells residents that if a notice is received from the City, “don’t ignore it.” Instead, he says, if residents “reach out,” the City can work with them, on their timelines, “look for programs and partner with homeowners to help.”

Wheeler, who notes that “code enforcement is about protecting the quality of housing stock in Atchison neighborhoods, to protect property values and ensure that housing is available for generations to come, explains that if the City allows properties to decay, “they eventually have to be demolished and that means less housing-especially affordable housing-for residents.”

Citations can result in fines from \$50 to \$500 per day should the matter go to municipal court, but Assistant City Manager Joe Warren said that is not the preferred route, adding that the City “would only go that route if property owners refused to work with the City.”

The release notes that Atchison “residents can expect to see Wheeler out in neighborhoods throughout the summer and fall and are encouraged to reach out if there are any questions” at 367-5560.

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