Why inspector issue matters to Winsted residents

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Editor of The Register Citizen:

The recent debate in Winsted regarding a request for information about a fire inspector highlights three issues, each of which is cause for concern.

The first issue involves the responsibilities of the fire marshal. The charter directs the fire marshal to perform the duties prescribed by state statutes. The statute is very clear that the local fire marshal shall inspect, at least once each year, all buildings and facilities of public service and shall make a monthly report to the town manager.

It has been publicly stated several times that there is no list of the buildings and facilities of public service which the fire marshal must inspect each year. If this is true, it is absurd and unacceptable. How on earth can the manager determine whether or not adequate inspections are occurring without the ability to compare the monthly report of the fire marshal with a list of those facilities which require inspection? If no list has ever existed, it must be created. If no monthly reports are submitted, there is a violation of state law.

The second issue is the public safety concern. Without regular inspections for hazards, all of us are in jeopardy when we work, shop, visit or otherwise frequent buildings of public service.

Haphazard or inadequate inspection procedures are simply intolerable in light of the many potential fire hazards which exist. A tragic reminder of the importance of inspections recently occurred in a small town in North Carolina in which a factory fire killed 25 workers who could not escape through blocked or locked fire exits.

Finally at issue is the manner in which information requests are responded to by the town. Requests for a list of the buildings which require inspection were made orally and in writing over a period of several months. to date, no information has been provided. The town must maintain a procedural approach in responding to requests for information. It is every citizens's right to obtain information relating to town matters promptly and without hassle.

Delay in responding to proper requests for information arouses suspicion that the town is not meeting its inspection and reporting responsibilities and leads to time consuming and costly complaints to the Freedom of Information Commission.

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