

Citizen Codes Inspector Program

Program Application

7/1/2011

Borough of Pottstown



**Citizen Codes Inspector Program
Borough of Pottstown
Department of Codes Enforcement**

Rules and Regulations

Purpose

The purpose of the Citizen Codes Inspection program is to supplement the efforts of the Borough of Pottstown's Codes Enforcement Department while providing a direct method by which interested and qualified borough residents can aid in the improvement of the quality of life in Pottstown.

How will this program work?

Quality of life issues are the key to this program. A code inspection is by its very nature is complex and detailed. There is no reasonable way to make citizens actual codes inspectors, but they can be additional eyes for the Codes Department by identifying potentially serious problems that include abandoned buildings and automobiles, overgrown weeds and grass, broken windows, peeling paint, snow/ice covered sidewalks, graffiti, trash/garbage, front porch debris, and general lack of compliance with property maintenance. In addition, CCI's can assist the Codes Department in focused areas and neighborhood sweeps.

How will the program operate?

Initially, the Codes Enforcement Department and the Borough Manager's Office will identify candidates for the program based on their submitted application. The candidates will come through their Borough Councilor, neighborhood/civic organization or other Borough resources. It is important to note that both the Codes Enforcement Department and Borough Manager's Office will review the list to insure that the candidate meets all criteria for the program. Any candidate not meeting the criteria will be notified. In some cases, exceptions to the selection guidelines may allow the candidate to be accepted.

Some of the necessary criteria are:

- Residency in the borough
- General good health
- Reading/writing/comprehension capabilities
- No outstanding violations/citations with the Borough of Pottstown in areas of parking, legal, codes, water, sewer, trash or taxes.
- Good communication skills
- Ability/desire to walk some distance on borough streets and alleyways

****Selection to the program is strictly at the discretion of the Borough Manager and the Codes Enforcement Department.****

Selected Citizen Inspectors will sign a written agreement with the Codes Enforcement Department that will detail authority and responsibilities. In addition, a “Hold Harmless Agreement” must be signed by the citizen inspector.

Citizen Codes Inspectors will not be paid nor compensated in any way. Citizen Codes Inspectors will not be provided with transportation.

Selected candidates will undergo training designed for the CCI program. The training program will last approximately four weeks, but will be adjusted as necessary to meet the Codes Department’s needs.

- The CCI program training will require approximately 7.0 hours over the four weeks. Initially, the CCI candidates will receive 2 - 4 hours of classroom instruction spread over one or two sessions. The first two hours of classroom training will cover the basics of the program utilizing written material and visual aids. Following the two hours of classroom time will be two hours of field time covering the classroom material “on the street”.

All training material will be prepared by and presented by staff of the Codes Enforcement Department.

Over the following three weeks the CCI candidates will spend 2 – 3 one-hour “sweep” sessions accompanying a Codes Department staff member (or other qualified person) on quality of life inspections. In total, 2 - 4 hours of training time will occur accompanying a staff member. During this time the CCI candidate will practice/compare CCI reports with the Codes trainer.

The practice Quality of Life reports (QL Reports) will be reviewed by the Codes Enforcement Departments staff for accuracy and fairness.

A final debriefing of the training will occur after a few weeks of on-the- street experience. This final session will be used to bring all candidates together to do a final review and answer questions.

The process of utilizing information and CCI reports is under review, but will generally follow this outline:

- A quality of life report currently developed by the Codes Enforcement Department or other specially designed form may be utilized.
- The CCI will inspect (at least in the early stages) areas **OTHER THAN THEIR OWN WARD** utilizing the training obtained. This is to avoid any confrontations and biases. Team inspections are required.

- The CCI QL Report will be submitted to the Codes Enforcement Department where they will be grouped, copied, and reviewed. They will be entered into the Permit-n-Force database in a fashion similar to complaints received from other sources.
- Review of the QL reports will allow the Codes Enforcement Department to determine whether the new CCIs understand the methods and objectives of the program. In the event that there appears to be confusion of purpose or method, clarification by either department may occur.
- Notification of residents of the program prior to startup will occur.

CCIs may be utilized in various projects including neighborhood sweeps, focused inspections, and assisting the Codes Department or neighborhood organizations.

Safety is paramount. Every effort must be made by the CCIs to avoid confrontations with residents. Initially, the Pottstown Police Department must be notified if CCIs are performing inspections.

CCIs will not go onto private property. All inspections will be made from the public right-of-way.

To remain a member of the CCI team each inspector must conduct a minimum of six inspections annually.

CCIs will be provided with identification showing them being a part of the CCI. It is planned that all CCIs will be provided with shirts or other apparel that indicates the Citizen Code Inspector program.

It has to be clear that under no circumstances can CCIs give residents or anyone else the impression that they are a Code Enforcement Officers for the Borough of Pottstown. CCIs are operating under the Codes Enforcement Department to assess quality-of-life issues throughout the Borough of Pottstown.

Other aspects of the CCI Program

The efforts of the CCIs will be tracked. The quality of the QL inspections as well as the positive disposition of the QL Report will do much to improve the quality of life in borough neighborhoods. Most QL Reports will lead to a borough codes inspector visiting the site and likely writing a citation. The citation will be tracked with a notation that a CCI initiated the process. In time it will be possible to evaluate the success of the program and individual CCIs.

After completion of training each CCI will receive identification issued by Borough of Pottstown that indicates that the CCI is working on a volunteer basis as a member of the quality-of-life team for the Codes Enforcement Department. This identification will include a photo ID that will be worn by the CCI while in the process of doing QL reviews. In addition, a CCI shirt will be provided or some other form of apparel.

Unless otherwise notified QL reviews will be conducted on a neighborhood area predetermined by the CCIs and the Codes Services Department. The reason for this is to insure that all areas in the borough are covered, and that particular areas are targeted when necessary. Areas to be “swept”

will be based 1) on the needs of the Codes Enforcement Department, and 2) on a neighborhood's request to have a QL sweep in its area.

**BOROUGH OF POTTSTOWN
DEPARTMENT OF CODES ENFORCEMENT
CITIZEN CODES INSPECTOR PROGRAM
APPLICATION (USE ADDITIONAL PAPER AS NEEDED)**

It is required that all persons be Borough of Pottstown residents and **18 years or older** to apply for the Citizen Codes Inspector Program.

Date: ___/___/___ Home Phone: (___)_____

Name: _____ Ward: _____

Home Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Date of Birth: ___/___/___ Race: _____ Sex: _____

Driver's License Number: _____

Why do you wish to participate in the Citizen Codes Inspector Program?

Please describe any skills or characteristics that you possess that would make you a good candidate for the Citizens Codes Inspector Program:

Do you have any outstanding violations/citations or fees owed to the Borough of Pottstown? These include code violations, parking tickets, water/sewer/trash/ fees, taxes or other fees/fines.

Mail completed application to:
For more information:
610-970-6520

Borough of Pottstown
100 E. High Street
Pottstown, PA 19464
Attention: Codes Enforcement Department

Program Application Disclaimer and Acknowledgement

I, _____, certify that the information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I understand that to falsify information is grounds for refusing entry into the program, or for discharge should I be accepted.

I hereby authorize any of the persons or organizations listed in my application to give all information concerning my previous employment, education, or any other information they might have, personal or otherwise, with regard to any of the subjects covered by this application, and release all such parties from all liability that may result from furnishing such information to you. I authorize you to request and receive such information.

In consideration for my participation, I acknowledge that I have received the Rules and Regulations with respect to the program, have read them, and fully understand them. I further agree to abide by the Rules and Regulations of the Borough of Pottstown and further acknowledge that those Rules and Regulations may be changed, withdrawn, added or interpreted at any time, at the Borough's sole option and without prior notice to me

I also acknowledge that my participation may be terminated, or any offer or acceptance of participation withdrawn, at any time, with or without cause, and with or without prior notice at the option of the Borough or myself.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

CITIZEN CODES INSPECTOR PROGRAM

HOLD HARMLESS AGREEMENT

BACKGROUND:

A. The undersigned has applied to participate in the Borough of Pottstown's Citizen Codes Inspector Program (hereinafter "Borough Program");

B. As a condition of acceptance into the Borough Program, the undersigned is required to execute a Release and Hold Harmless to the Borough;

C. The undersigned chooses to participate in the Borough Program voluntarily and further agrees to assume the risk of injury to themselves and their personal property; and

D. The background is incorporated into this Hold Harmless.

I, the undersigned, for myself, my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, do hereby remise, release, quitclaim and forever discharge and hold harmless the Borough of Pottstown, its agents, officers, employees, and assigns, from any and all liability, known or unknown, potential or otherwise, arising from my action or conduct as it relates to my participation in the Borough's Citizen Codes Inspector Program.

I understand that I have made this request, I am voluntarily undertaking this effort, and do hereby assume the risk of any and all loss, damage or injury by virtue of my actions to myself or any third parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this _____ day of _____, 2011.

_____ (SEAL)

Witness