

## **Summary of Meeting of the Permitted Interaction Group of the Committee on Public Infrastructure and Technology Relating to Compliance with Fire Safety Ordinances in Residential High-Rise Buildings on February 16, 2022**

### **I. Summary of Panel Discussion:**

Panelists included:

Pauli Wong - Associa Hawaii  
Allen Wilson - Hawaiiana Management Company, Ltd.  
Jonathan Billings - Touchstone Properties, Ltd.  
  
Douglas Buhr - Douglas Engineering Pacific, Inc.  
  
Jane Sugimura - Hawaii Council of Community Associations

#### **Pauli Wong:**

- Implementation of the ordinance is cost-prohibitive.
- Has concerns relating to increased costs for insurance premiums.
- Financial impacts on owners of the fire alarm sprinklers/alarm requirements.

#### **Allen Wilson:**

- Life Safety Evaluations (LSE) standards and criteria are not being implemented in a consistent manner
- Government mandates should include government financial support or assistance.
- Special assessments will force condo owners to move out of the buildings and the cost of implementation will bankrupt some condo associations.

#### **Jonathan Billings:**

- There is no consistency between the professional companies being engaged to perform the Life Safety Evaluations: there are different interpretations of LSE criteria, and inconsistent messages or guidelines that the professionals are following when conducting the evaluation.
- Has issues with the increased costs and availability of building materials and supplies.
- Buildings are required to maintain a 'Reserve Fund' to address repairs that are required by State law, which have been planned and budgeted for. The installation of Fire Sprinklers or Fire Alarm Systems that have not been planned or budgeted for would be in addition to what has already been set aside (by condo associations).

#### **Douglas Buhr:**

- There is no building that can't pass the LSE
- The LSE criteria are good if they are applied evenly and fairly; however, individual evaluations and implementation of the criteria have been inconsistent.
- No guidelines have been provided to licensed professionals who evaluate buildings using the LSE criteria.

#### **Jane Sugimura:**

- Has concerns relating to the costs of life safety improvements and fire sprinklers.

- Has concerns relating to increased costs of insurance premiums for condo associations, which are being experienced even for buildings that are exempt from installing fire sprinklers.
- Condo associations are expressing frustration over implementation of the ordinance.

## **II. Questions without Responses (for Follow-Up)**

- **Question 2:** *We've spent much time on compliance. What has been done to provide more emphasis on Communicating, Educating, Training, etc. to the condo associations and their owners about fire safety?*
- **Question 4:** *If the document was repealed, what are the engineers basing their evaluations on now? Does this mean that we condo owners are at the mercy of the engineer?*
- **Question 5:** *Shouldn't the buildings be evaluated by each design and receive points accordingly?*

## **III. Panel Recommendations for Improvements to Ordinance 19-4**

- Installation of Sprinklers should be voluntary.
- Consider extending or modifying the compliance deadline:
  - Focus first on items that can easily be addressed, such as:
    - Immediate (6-12 months): update/confirm evacuation plans, update lists of residents who need assistance, functional smoke alarms in each unit.
    - Next 1-2 years: address door closure mechanisms, seal easily-accessible wall/floor penetrations.
    - Next 2-3 years: address unit door replacement, emergency lighting.
    - Next 4-6 years: address fire systems, elevator recall.
- There should be no timeframe on vertical openings:
  - Closing off vertical openings is already required when an association replaces drain, waste and vent lines/chilled water lines & chilled water line insulations.
  - Distinguish between vertical openings and pipe openings.
- Third Party Professionals: evaluators need to follow a consistent guideline that does not vary from one company to another.
- Financial assistance, such as grants and subsidies, would help associations comply.
- Identify items that require correction, but do not override a condo association's governing documents.
- Ensure that DPP has adequate staff to process building permits needed to make necessary fire safety improvements.