Town is Successful In Effort to Get Owner to Comply with Town Code by Changing Illegal Multi-Family House in Setauket Back to Single Family
posted on 2/8/2013 10:22:55 AM

February 6, 2013

Supervisor Romaine and Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld thank town law department Quality of Life Task Force and the landlord involved for his compliance with the new town law that closed loopholes regarding illegal overcrowded rental housing.

Farmingville, NY - In the Town's ongoing fight against illegal overcrowded rental housing, the Town's Law Department were able to get the owners of 82 Krispin Street in Setauket to return the house to a single family dwelling in compliance with the Town Code. The owners had illegally renovated the house and rented out individual bedrooms to college students and paved the entire front yard to accommodate up to 15 vehicles. Both the Supervisor and the Councilman's office had received numerous complaints from neighborhood residents who were concerned about the increased activity at the home, a two-story colonial located at the end of a cul-de-sac. Both the Supervisor's office and the Councilman advised the Town Attorney who directed the Law Department to investigate.

"Illegal, overcrowded rental housing is a detriment to the quality of life in many neighborhoods, and fortunately in this case, we had an owner who did the right thing for the community," said Supervisor Romaine, "I commend our Law Department for the job they are doing to fight back as well as the local Councilman Steve Fiore Rosenfeld, for his efforts on this matter. Anyone who violates our town codes will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

"Thanks to the quick work of our Law Department, the stalwart diligence of the residents on Krispin Street and the willingness of the landlord to comply with our Town Code, we have been able to turn a bad situation into something good," said Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld, "I will continue to work hand in hand with our Supervisor and the Law Department to strengthen our codes to better fight illegal, unsafe overcrowded housing and preserve the character and quality of life in our neighborhoods, so families can continue to enjoy the quiet and peaceful enjoyment of their homes."

"The nearby residents were extremely concerned about the negative impact that this illegal overcrowded rental house would have on their quality of life," said Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld, "First of all, illegal overcrowded housing has no place in our quiet historic residential neighborhoods, and second, illegally renovated homes are a threat to the health and safety of the tenants, as well as a nuisance to those homeowners who live near them. It was imperative that we send out our Law Department investigators to get to the bottom of what was going on there."

Investigators gained access to the home after a resident of the home allowed them to enter for inspection. They found that it was divided into seven bedrooms with individual key locks, three of which were converted from other living space, a clear violation of the Town's Building Code. A total of nine people were living in the home, all of them apparently college students. Investigators found that most of the rooms contained small refrigerators and they also obtained evidence that the owner had rented out the rooms individually and did not rent the entire home to one family.

To enforce the definition of "family" in this case, the Law Department cited two local laws that were amended in September 2012 under Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld's sponsorship. The laws (§85-1 and §82-10 chapters of the Town code) include a legal definition of "family" and place responsibility to show that relationship in the hands of the landlord or his tenants. The amendments, which were a result of work by the Councilman partnering with the local civic association and the Town Law Department, allow the Town to close up a loophole in the enforcement of overcrowded rental housing as it relates to the definition of "family."

Councilman Fiore-Rosenfeld said, "It initially appeared that the property owners were in violation of the Town's definition of 'family.' Thanks to the new law, we were able to prove that the residents living inside the house were indeed not the equivalent of a traditional family. This was clearly an illegal rooming house and we certainly weren't going to allow it to continue as such."

Law Investigators issued five Appearance Tickets including two misdemeanors to the property owners with a court date of November 29, 2012. Soon after being served, the owners contacted the Town and stated their intentions to comply with the Town Code and return the home to a single family dwelling. At the end of the semester, all of the
students moved out and the owners hired a contractor to convert the home back to its original condition. In early January, Law Investigators re-inspected the home and found that the owners had complied with all Town Codes as requested.