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**APPLETON FIRE DEPARTMENT  
700 N. DREW STREET  
APPLETON, WI 54911**

## MEMORANDUM

To: Safety and Licensing Committee

From: Jeremy J, Hansen, Fire Chief

Date : March 25, 2021

Re: Proposed Modifications to Chapter 6 of the Appleton Municipal Code

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The fire service has the daunting task of keeping up with changes in technology and fire safety through every industry. This is eased by adopting a current code. Newer codes set minimum standards of safety for new technology and are better address unsafe conditions that were not a concern in previous editions. Adopting a more current edition of the code removes the requirement for an inspector to use alternative means in a code determination regarding new technology or situations.

The Appleton Fire Department recommends adoption of the 2018 International Fire Code (IFC) through the proposed modifications to Chapter 6 of the Appleton Municipal Code. The reasons for this are many; however the most impactful of these reasons are outlined below.

One of the biggest challenges to arise in recent years is school intruder safety. The current edition of the code strictly prohibits any locking mechanisms that are not easily defeatable by an intruder. The 2018 IFC allows more robust locking arrangements while maintaining fire safety. Further, technology that allows remote locking and unlocking of classroom doors is now more commonplace. This is also now allowed through the 2018 IFC. This change affects every educational use building in the city.

Another area of the 2015 IFC that is lacking in clarity is the requirements for idle pallet storage. The idle storage of pallets creates a hazardous fire safety condition as shown in pallet storage fires in Modesto, CA and Detroit, MI. A small fire quickly becomes a large fire, and without the presence of fire breaks, eventually consumes the entire pile. The height of the piles in these cases also aggravated the issue. Idle pallets pose a collapse hazard and firefighters were not able to get close enough to provide effective suppression efforts due to the height of the pallets. The 2018 IFC addresses these hazards by requiring fire breaks and maximum heights for piles of pallets. There are several businesses that will benefit from the increased fire safety this change brings.

The 2018 IFC addresses another serious fire safety concern: existing Group A-2 occupancies that serve alcohol with an occupant load over 300 people. As was seen with the Station Nightclub in West Warwick, RI, in 2003, these occupancies present a unique hazard. In the Station Nightclub, 100 people died and over 100 more were treated for severe burn injuries. The total number of people in the nightclub exceeded 450 the night of the fire. The 2018 IFC serves to address the hazard in these occupancies by requiring retroactively the installation of sprinklers in A-2 occupancies that serve alcohol and have an occupant load over 300 people. For new construction, the occupant load

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threshold for sprinklers in an A-2 occupancy is 100 people. Many of these types of businesses have installed sprinklers as part of past remodeling projects, while others have chosen to lower their occupant load to avoid the sprinkler requirement. This change will not impact any businesses in the City of Appleton. Any existing alcohol serving A-2 occupancies are either already protected by an approved sprinkler system, or have an occupant load under 300 people.

Technology is not the only reason for adopting a newer version of a fire code. The Insurance Services Office (ISO) uses the Fire Service Rating Schedule (FSRS) to grade fire departments, called the Public Protection Classification (PPC). One of the criteria in the FSRS is that the adopted model fire code edition is no older than five years. To continue to achieve full credit in this category, the adoption of the 2018 IFC is recommended.