

DEPARTMENT OF CODE ENFORCEMENT

Summary of Annual Registration of Vacant Buildings and Associated Fees City of Altoona Ordinance No. 5564, Section 1003.3

Fee Schedule:

Your registration fee for this year is based upon the total number of years the property has been vacant as of November 1st, regardless of varying ownership during the period of vacancy. The fee schedule is as follows:

Less than 1 year vacant:	\$ 0.00
1 year vacant:	\$ 500.00
2 years vacant:	\$1000.00
3-4 years vacant:	\$2000.00
5-9 years vacant:	\$3500.00
10 years vacant:	\$5000.00
10 + years vacant	\$5000.00 plus additional \$500.00 for every year property has been vacant over 10 years

One-Time Waiver of Registration Fee:

You may request a one-time waiver of your vacant registration fee from the Department of Code Enforcement if the following conditions apply:

1. You are in the process of demolition, rehabilitation or other substantial repair of the vacant building, **and** work will be completed in a reasonable amount of time;
2. You were actively attempting to sell or lease the property during the vacancy period

To request a waiver, you must submit a written letter to the Director of the Department of Code Enforcement:

Vacant Registration Letter
City of Altoona
Department of Code Enforcement
1301 12th Street, Suite 104
Altoona PA 16601

Documents that establish the conditions of a waiver must be included with your letter. To be considered, your written request must be received in the Department of Code Enforcement no later than **thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the billing statement**. **Waiver requests must be received in writing by November 30th.**

If you provide adequate evidence that you are in the process of repairing, demolishing, selling or leasing the property, the Director may waive the registration fee imposed for the current year. A registration fee may only be waived **ONCE**. Therefore, if this property is not sold or occupied by the following year, you are not eligible for any further waivers.

Past due fees are not subject to a request for a waiver. All past due balances must be paid in order to receive a waiver of the current year's fees.

If you have received a waiver last year, and are nearly completed with your project, you may request a ninety (90) day extension to your original waiver. **Extensions are for ninety (90) days only.** If you fail to sell, occupy or demolish the property within that timeframe, you will be required to pay the full registration fee due. Follow the instructions for requesting a waiver, requesting a **90-Day Waiver Extension** in its place.

A two (2) year waiver of the registration fees may be requested if the owner meets the criteria for non-profit organizations as defined by Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. **Documentation supporting your non-profit status must be included with your request.**

If the Director denies your request for a waiver, you may appeal the Director's decision to the City of Altoona Code Appeals Board by following the procedures specified below for an appeal. Your appeal request must be received **within fifteen (15) days from the date of the Director's decision**. A non-refundable filing fee of \$150.00 is required in order to appeal.

Appeal from the Registration Requirement:

As the owner, you have the right to appeal the registration requirement and/or the registration fee imposed. In order to appeal the registration and/or fee, please complete the City of Altoona Code Appeals Board Application stating the reason you believe you are not subject to the registration requirement/fee and submit a \$150.00 non-refundable filing fee to:

City of Altoona
Department of Code Enforcement
1301 12th Street, Suite 104
Altoona PA 16601

To be considered, your request must be received with the \$150.00 appeal fee in the City of Altoona Department of Code Enforcement **no later than fifteen (15) days from the date of the billing statement**.

Upon receipt of your request for an appeal, a hearing will be scheduled before the City of Altoona Code Appeals Board. At this hearing, you may introduce evidence and/or witnesses to support your appeal (see page 1). An attorney may represent you or you may choose to present your appeal on your own. On appeal, the owner bears the burden of proving the property was occupied during that period of time he or she was assessed a vacant registration fee or that he or she is not the owner of the property. The City of Altoona Code Appeals Board has the authority to affirm, modify, reverse, vacate or revoke the action for which the appeal is being made. A written notice of the Board's decision will follow the hearing.

Please be advised that the appeal process is for all issues other than request for waiver of the registration fee. If you are only requesting a waiver, follow the instructions for requesting a waiver. However, if you wish to appeal the merits of the registration requirement and also request a waiver of the registration fee, please follow the applicable procedures for each request and submit both letters, with the non-refundable \$150.00 appeal fee no later than 15 calendar days from the date of the billing statement. A request for waiver of the registration fee submitted after the denial of an appeal by the Code Appeals Board will not be considered.

Delinquent Registration Fees as a Lien:

After the owner is given notice of the amount of the registration fee due, except for those owners who have properly perfected an appeal or received a waiver, and the owner fails to pay the amount due, said amount shall constitute a debt due and owing to the City, and the City may commence a civil action to collect the unpaid debt.

Duty to Amend Registration Statement

If the status of the registration information changes during the course of any calendar year, it is the responsibility of the owner, responsible party or agent for the same to contact the City of Altoona Department of Code Enforcement within thirty (30) days of the occurrence of such change and advise the Department in writing of those changes.

Violations; Penalties

The failure or refusal for any reason of any owner, or agent acting on behalf of the owner to register a vacant building or to pay any required fees pursuant to the provisions of this section within thirty (30) days after they become due shall constitute a violation punishable upon conviction thereof by a fine in the amount of not less than \$100.00 nor more than \$500.00 for each failure or refusal to register, or for each failure to refusal to pay a required vacant building fee, as applicable. In such cases, whenever the minimum fine of \$100.00 is imposed, it shall not be subject to suspension or reduction for any reason.