

Board told to get tougher on bad landlords

◆ **Aldermen:** Larger fines and greater city oversight of rental properties discussed.

By RILEY YATES
Union Leader Staff

MANCHESTER — Two dozen residents turned out to City Hall last night to urge aldermen to enact beefed up rules against neglectful landlords.

NeighborWorks Greater Manchester has proposed more than doubling the fines for housing code violations, requiring landlords to notify tenants of waste requirements and allowing city officials to more often cite properties that are

not in compliance.

Chris Leone, a West Granite Street resident who spoke for the group, told aldermen that enacting the proposals help address a "common sense issue" in which residents are crying for action.

Neglect "is ruining our neighborhoods," Leone said. "And quite frankly, it looks trashy."

Aldermen have long looked for ways to cope with quality of life issues. The proposed ordinance changes are being reviewed by the Building Department, with a report expected next month.

Last night, aldermen looked at several other moves to ad-

► See **Landlords**, Page B2

Landlords

Continued From Page B1

dress trash violations as well, though they took no final votes.

Matt Normand, a deputy city clerk who heads a team of officials policing code violations, said since September they have received 80 qualified complaints.

Of them, 34 have been resolved, 26 are being worked on, and 20 still need to be investigated, Normand said.

More than a majority of complaints involve trash or junk, while they also include illegal businesses, homeless sites and abandoned properties. A hand-ful involved animals, including a property with 40 cats and another with a bothersome rooster.

Two committees took steps forward on a couple of other ideas. The Special Committee on Solid Waste asked staff to look

into ways to charge landlords for excessive bulky waste pickups.

And the Committee on Bills on Second Reading recommended establishing a solid waste compliance officer position that would police garbage ordinances.

The Highway Department would need to get permission from aldermen to fill the position, which would draw a salary of between \$32,312 and \$46,069 a year.

Alderman George Smith of Ward 10 said aldermen need to begin to take action on possible solutions. He said he walked his ward yesterday and found nine properties with "extreme viola-tions."

"It's about time that we helped out the homeowners to clean up," Smith said.

Also last night, aldermen bris-tled over a delay in resolving a \$1.4 million dispute between the city and the Manchester

Employees' Contributory Retirement System.

The retirement system long ago sent Manchester the \$1.4 million bill, which trustees said was incurred when the city's contribution method changed in 2004.

But a study by Randy Sherman, who is now the city interim finance director, found that Manchester had pre-paid the bill as part of its earlier contribu-tions.

Last night, Sherman said he expects trustees will file a lawsuit over the matter, since the statute of limitations to press the claim ends Dec. 29.

Sherman and City Solicitor Tom Clark said the two parties will continue to negotiate, even if a suit is filed. Aldermen said the matter should have been settled long ago.

"Get in a room, lock the door and fix it," said Alderman At-large Dan O'Neil.

WFTS