

Ordinance No. 1036

AN ORDINANCE to amend Chapter 12 of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1953, as amended, by adding a new article thereto numbered XXVII, which Chapter 12 relates to FIRE PREVENTION and which new Article XXVII provides for SAFETY REGULATIONS IN NURSING, CONVALESCENT, OLD AGE AND SIMILAR TYPE HOMES AND REQUIRES PERMITS FOR THEIR OPERATION

WHEREAS, in recent years throughout the country a number of serious and tragic fires have occurred in nursing and similar type homes indicating the need for more stringent regulations, and

WHEREAS, it is the desire of the Fire Prevention Bureau and the City Council to prevent the happening of any such disaster in Alexandria.

THE CITY COUNCIL OF ALEXANDRIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

Section 1. That Chapter 12 of The Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia, 1953, as amended, be and the same hereby is amended by adding a new article numbered XXVII thereto to read as follows:

ARTICLE XXVII

Safety Regulations and Permits Required in Nursing, Convalescent, Old Age and Similar Type Homes

Sec. 12-279—DEFINITIONS

- (a) "A nursing, convalescent or old age home" shall mean a building or buildings used for nursing, care and lodging or boarding on a 24-hour basis of four or more infants or children, convalescents or aged persons, but shall not include hospitals and mental or correctional institutions or facilities operated by the City of Alexandria, Virginia, the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Federal Government, or other public entity or agency.
- (b) "Ambulatory person" shall mean a person who, unaided, is physically and mentally capable of walking a normal path to safety, including the ascent and descent of stairs.
- (c) "Approved" shall mean accepted by the enforcing official as a result of his investigation and experience, or by reason of test, listing or approval by Underwriter's Laboratories, Inc., the National Bureau of Standards, the American Gas Association Laboratories or other nationally recognized testing authorities.
- (d) "Automatic fire detection system" shall mean a system which automatically detects a fire condition and actuates a fire alarm signal device.
- (e) "Person" shall mean and include person, persons, children, infants, firm, corporation or partnership.

Sec. 12-280—PERMIT REQUIRED

No nursing, convalescent or old age home, as defined in Sec. 12-279 of this chapter, shall be operated except under a permit from the Fire Prevention Bureau of the City of Alexandria, Virginia. Such permit shall be issued for one year from the date of issue and shall be revocable for cause. Application for permit shall be made on the form provided for the purpose and, where deemed necessary, shall include plans showing details of the construction,

exit facilities and fire protection equipment. No permit shall be issued until the provisions of this ordinance have been complied with and approval has been obtained from the Fire Prevention Bureau.

Sec. 12-281 OCCUPANCY OF HOMES

- (a) The number of persons in any room or area used as sleeping quarters shall not exceed the proportion of one adult for each 75 square feet, one child for each 50 square feet, one infant for each 25 square feet; for the purpose of this section "adult" shall mean a person over 12 years of age, "child" shall mean a person over 1 year but under 13 years of age, "infant" shall mean a person under 1 year of age.
- (b) No person other than a patient or employee of a nursing, convalescent, or old age home shall occupy any building used as sleeping quarters for any such home.
- (c) A basement shall be considered as a story if one-half or more of its clear height is above the average elevation of the ground adjoining the building on all sides. An unoccupied attic or roof space shall not be considered as a story.

Sec. 12-282 FIRE RESISTANCE AND FIRESTOPPING

- (a) No new building shall hereafter be constructed for use as a nursing, convalescent, or old age home and no building shall hereafter be converted for use as such a home unless such buildings be fire resistive. (Type I Construction)
- (b) Exterior walls and interior partitions shall be fire-stopped so as to cut off all concealed draft openings both horizontal and vertical between any cellar or basement and the first floor. Such fire-stopping may consist of suitable noncombustible material at least 2 inches thick.

Sec. 12-283 HAZARDOUS AREAS AND COMBUSTIBLE STORAGE

- (a) Heating apparatus and boiler or furnace rooms, basements or attics used for the storage of combustible material, workrooms such as carpenter shops, paint shops and upholstery shops, central storerooms such as furniture, mattresses and miscellaneous storage, and similar occupancies intended to contain combustible materials which will either be easily ignited, burn with an intense flame or result in the production of dense smoke and fumes, shall be classified as hazardous areas.
- (b) Hazardous areas, as listed in Sec. 12-283 (a) shall be separated from other areas by noncombustible construction having a fire-resistance rating of at least 2 hours, except that hazardous areas, other than boiler or furnace rooms, may be protected by an approved automatic fire-detection or automatic sprinkler system in lieu of such construction.
- (c) The use of attics or basements for the storage of unnecessary combustible materials shall be prohibited.

Sec. 12-284 EXIT FACILITIES REQUIRED

- (a) At least two exits, remote from each other, shall be provided for every occupied story of a building.
- (b) Exits shall be of such number and so located that the distance of travel from the door of any occupied room to an

exit from that floor shall not exceed 75 feet in an un-sprinklered building nor 112.5 feet in a sprinklered building, except where buildings are constructed and protected to comply with all requirements applicable to new buildings used for institutional occupancy.

- (c) The aggregate width of exit stairs and ramps shall be such as to provide sufficient 22-inch exit units, at the rate of 25 persons per exit unit, for the maximum number of persons that may occupy any floor, except where buildings are constructed and protected to comply with all requirements applicable to new buildings used for institutional occupancy.
- (d) Each occupied room shall have at least one doorway opening directly to the outside, or to a corridor leading directly or by a stairway or ramp to the outside, or to an adjacent room which has such access to the outside.

Sec. 12-285 STAIRWAYS AND VERTICAL OPENINGS

- (a) Stairs and ramps serving as required exits shall be not less than 36 inches wide in existing nursing, convalescent and old age homes and not less than 44 inches wide in existing buildings hereafter converted to such use.
- (b) At least one required exit from each floor above or below the first floor shall lead directly, or through an enclosed corridor, to the outside. A second or third required exit, where a more direct exit is impractical, may lead to a first floor lobby having ample and direct exits to the outside.
- (c) In buildings hereafter built or converted to use as a nursing, convalescent or old age home, all floor openings, such as interior stairways, laundry chutes and dumbwaiter shafts, extending to cellar or basement and between occupied floors shall be enclosed in partitions having a fire-resistance rating of not less than two hours.
- (d) In existing buildings used for nursing, convalescent or old age homes all floor openings shall be enclosed as required by Sec. 12-285 (c), except that stairway enclosures may be either at the head or foot of each stairway from one floor to another.

Sec. 12-286—CORRIDORS AND PASSAGEWAYS

- (a) Corridors and passageways to be used as a means of exit, or part of a means of exit, shall be at least 60 inches wide.
- (b) Corridors and passageways to be used as a means of exit, or part of a means of exit, shall be unobstructed and shall not lead through any room or space used for a purpose that may obstruct free passage. Corridors and passageways which lead to the outside from any required stairway shall be enclosed as required for stairways.

Sec. 12-287 DOORWAYS

- (a) Doorways serving as exits or parts of exits shall be at least 32 inches wide.
- (b) All doorways to stairways, vertical openings, passageways or hazardous areas, which are required to be enclosed, shall be provided with fire doors or self-closing smoke resistive doors.

Sec. 12-288 DIVISION OF FLOOR OPENINGS

- (a) In all buildings all floors above the first floor occupied by

persons under care and exceeding 3,000 square feet in floor area shall be divided into separate areas by smoke barriers so located as to provide ample space on each side for the total number of beds on the floor. Doors provided in such smoke barriers shall be smoke resistive doors, as described in Sec. 12-288 (b), so installed that they may normally be kept in open position, but will close automatically or may be released manually to self-closing action.

- (b) Smoke barriers shall have a fire-resistance rating of not less than 2 hours. Metal, metal covered or 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch thick solid core flush type wood doors, so hung as to be reasonably smoke tight, may be accepted as smoke resistive doors. Openings in either smoke barriers or smoke resistive doors shall be glazed with a wire glass in metal frame.

Sec. 12-289 EXIT SIGNS

Signs bearing the word "Exit" in plain legible block letters shall be placed at each exit opening, except at doors directly from rooms to exit corridors or passageways and except at doors leading obviously to the outside from the entrance floor. Additional signs shall be placed in corridors and passageways wherever necessary to indicate the direction of exit. Letters of signs shall be at least 6 inches high, except that the letters of internally illuminated exit signs may be not less than 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. All exit and directional signs shall be maintained clearly legible by electric illumination or other acceptable means when natural light fails.

Sec. 12-290 INTERIOR FINISH AND DECORATIVE MATERIALS

- (a) Wall and ceiling surfaces of all occupied rooms and of all exit ways therefrom shall be of such material or so treated as not to have a flame spread classification of more than 175 according to the method for the "Fire Hazard Classification of Building Materials" of Underwriters' Laboratories, Inc.
- (b) All combustible decorative material, including textile floor coverings and curtains located in corridors, passageways or stairway enclosures and in lobbies or other rooms or spaces for use by occupants or visitors, shall be rendered and maintained flame-resistant. A material shall be deemed to be flame-resistant if it will not ignite and allow flame to spread over the surface when exposed to match flame test applied to a piece removed from the material and tested in a safe place. The piece shall be held vertically and the bottom edge exposed to a flame from a common match held in a horizontal position, one-half inch underneath the piece, and at a constant location for a minimum of 15 seconds.

Sec. 12-291 HEATING, LIGHTING AND OTHER SERVICE EQUIPMENT

- (a) The heating of buildings occupied as nursing, convalescent or old age homes shall be restricted to steam, hot water or warm air systems employing central heating plants with installation such as to safeguard the inherent fire hazard. The use of portable heaters of any kind is hereby prohibited.
- (b) Installation of heating and ventilating systems and equipment in accordance with the Standards of the National Board of Fire Underwriters for the Installation of Heat Producing

Appliances, Heating, Ventilating, Air Conditioning, Blower and Exhaust Systems shall be deemed prima facie evidence of compliance with the requirement that installation be such as to safeguard the inherent fire hazard.

- (c) Lighting shall be restricted to electricity. Electric wiring, motors, and other electrical equipment shall be installed in accordance with nationally recognized safe practice. Compliance with the Standards of the National Board of Fire Underwriters known as the National Electrical Code shall be deemed prima facie evidence of compliance with nationally recognized safe practice.

Sec. 12-292 EXTINGUISHING EQUIPMENT

Approved-type fire extinguishers shall be provided on each floor, so located that a person will not have to travel more than 75 feet from any point to reach the nearest extinguisher. An additional extinguisher shall be provided in, or adjacent to, each kitchen or basement storage room.

Sec. 12-293 ALARM SYSTEMS

- (a) A manually operated electric fire alarm system shall be provided, except:
1. Where the entire building is protected by an automatic sprinkler system equipped with a water flow alarm; or
 2. Where the entire building is protected by an automatic fire-detection system.
- (b) Fire alarm systems shall be approved type. At least one fire alarm sending station shall be provided on each story, located at a readily accessible point in the natural path of escape from fire. The system shall be so arranged that the operation of any sending station will sound an alarm which is audible throughout the building, or where advisable because of the type of occupancy, the system may be so arranged that the initial alarm signal will sound only at some central point where 24-hour service is maintained.
- (c) Automatic fire-detection systems shall be approved supervised systems. Where fixed temperature devices are used they shall be constructed to operate at 165 degrees Fahrenheit or less, except that in spaces where high temperature is normal devices having a higher operating point may be used. Operation of a thermostatic device shall cause an alarm which is audible throughout the building or, where advisable, because of the type of occupancy, the system may be so arranged that the initial alarm signal will sound only at some central point where 24-hour service is maintained.

Sec. 12-294 ATTENDANTS

Every nursing, convalescent or old age home shall have for every 25 persons, or fraction thereof, at least one attendant on duty on the premises, awake and dressed at all times, and, in addition, one stand-by attendant within hearing distance and available for emergency service. These attendants shall be at least 18 years of age and capable of performing the required duties of evacua-

tion. No person other than the management or a person under management control shall be considered as an attendant.

Sec. 12-295 EVACUATION PLAN

- (a) Every nursing convalescent or old age home shall formulate a plan for the protection of all persons in the event of fire and for their evacuation to areas of refuge and from the building when necessary. All employes shall be instructed and kept informed respecting their duties under the plan
- (b) Every mattress shall be provided with strong canvas or leather handles so that it may serve as a stretcher when necessary for evacuation.

Sec. 12-296 SMOKING

Smoking may be permitted in nursing, convalescent or old age homes only where proper facilities are provided. Smoking shall not be permitted in sleeping quarters, except at such times as supervision is provided.

Sec. 12-297—INSPECTIONS

Every building coming within the scope of this article shall be inspected periodically by representatives of the Fire Prevention Bureau of the City of Alexandria in order to insure proper compliance with the provisions of this article.

Sec. 12-298 EFFECTIVE DATE AS TO REGULATIONS

- (a) New buildings or buildings being converted:
The regulations of this article shall be effective on and after the passage of this Article XXVII as to any new building constructed or for old buildings being converted for use as a nursing, convalescent, old age home or similar type home.
- (b) Already existing buildings:
Any building now being used as either a nursing, convalescent old age or similar home shall comply with the regulations set forth in this article on or before July 1, 1960, and it shall be unlawful to operate after that date without fully complying with all of said regulations and obtaining a valid permit as hereinbefore prescribed.

Sec. 12-299 VIOLATIONS

It shall be unlawful for any person to violate any of the provisions of this article.

Section 2. That this ordinance shall be published in a newspaper of general circulation in the City not later than five (5) days following its introduction together with a notice containing the time and place for a public hearing. The Clerk of the Council shall note the date of introduction and first reading, the date of publication, the date of the public hearing, and the date of the second reading and final passage in the minutes of the meeting. This ordinance shall become effective the date of its final passage.

LEROY S. BENDHEIM
Mayor

Final Passage: Sept. 30, 1959