

Dangerous or Unsightly Premises

CoTW

October 13, 2026

something inspiring awaits



By-law Enforcement Officers

By-Law Enforcement Officers Enforce a wide array of by-laws and other legislation which includes the Dangerous or Unsightly Premises. By-Laws enforced include but not limited to, Dog By-Law, Solid Waste By-Law (includes illegal dumping), Outdoors Fire By-Law, Noise By-Law in Windsor and Hantsport, Street and Sidewalks By-Law, among others. We enforce parking on Municipal owned streets and property under the Motor Vehicle Act, Fences and Detention of Stray Livestock Act, liaison between the underhoused and WHRM and post properties for tax sale. We handle all the administrative work for parking tickets issued.



Authority

- The authority to enforce and administer dangerous or unsightly properties comes from the Municipal Government Act (MGA), specifically Sections 344-353.
- In addition to the MGA, West Hants Regional Municipality has a Dangerous or Unsightly Premises Policy RCOGE-005.00.



<https://westhants.ca/government/by-laws-and-policies/council-policies/2655-dangerous-or-unsightly-premises-policy-rcoge-005-00/file>



Definition

Section 3(r) of the MGA defines Dangerous or Unsightly premises as:

partly demolished, decayed, deteriorated or in a state of disrepair so as to be dangerous, unsightly or unhealthy, and includes property containing

- (i) ashes, junk, cleanings of yards or other rubbish or refuse or a derelict vehicle, vessel, item of equipment or machinery, or bodies of these or parts thereof,
- (ii) an accumulation of wood shavings, paper, sawdust, dry and inflammable grass or weeds or other combustible material,
- (iia) an accumulation or collection of materials or refuse that is stockpiled, hidden or stored away and is dangerous, unsightly, unhealthy or offensive to a person, or

Definition Cont.

- (iii) any other thing that is dangerous, unsightly, unhealthy or offensive to a person, and includes property or a building or structure with or without structural deficiencies
- (iv) that is in a ruinous or dilapidated condition,
- (v) the condition of which seriously depreciates the value of land or buildings in the vicinity,
- (vi) that is in such a state of non-repair as to be no longer suitable for human habitation or business purposes,
- (vii) that is an allurements to children who may play there to their danger,
- (viii) constituting a hazard to the health or safety of the public,
- (ix) that is unsightly in relation to neighbouring properties because the exterior finish of the building or structure or the landscaping is not maintained,



Definition Cont.

- (x) that is a fire hazard to itself or to surrounding lands or buildings,
- (xi) that has been excavated or had fill placed on it in a manner that results in a hazard, or
- (xii) that is in a poor state of hygiene or cleanliness;

Staff

- By-law Enforcement Officers (Ryan and Shawn)
- Administrator (Tim Leslie)

Complaint Received

- To open an investigation, a resident must submit a **signed** complaint form online or in person indicating what on a property they believe is dangerous or unsightly.
- By-Law Enforcement Officers will visit the property to take photos which will be used as evidence for the Administrator to view and decide what needs to be remedied, if anything.
- If the property owner is home, By-Law Enforcement Officers will discuss the complaint and process and take any feedback they provide back to the Administrator.



Dangerous and Unsightly Files

These files can be complicated, especially when a structure may need to be demolished. If the Administrator determines that a demolition may be required and the property owner is no longer working with staff to address the issue, the matter is brought to Council.

Council makes the final decision and sets a deadline for the owner to complete the required work.



Dangerous and Unsightly Files Cont.

If the deadline passes without the work being done, WHRM may hire a contractor to complete it and add the costs to the property's tax account as a first lien.

Prior to a demolition, WHRM will hire a company to test the structure for lead paint and asbestos prior to demolishing.



Dangerous and Unsightly Files Cont.

For properties that do not require demolition, the Administrator can set deadlines and provide extensions when appropriate, except in situations that pose an immediate danger and require urgent action.

Staff prefer to work with property owners and allow them to complete the necessary improvements themselves, as long as reasonable progress is being made.

The goal is to achieve compliance without creating unnecessary hardship. However, if a property owner stops working with staff or is unable to complete the required work, the process may move forward to a formal order.



Year	Dangerous or Unsightly Files Investigated
2021	43
2022	29
2023	26
2024	39
2025	20
2026 Year to date	41

Understanding the Process

By-law Enforcement Officers

- Receive a written complaint
- Investigate and take photos
- All evidence given to the Administrator
- Send letter for any clean up with deadline
- Follow up and take photos
- Discuss follow up photos with Administrator and ask for direction

Understanding the Process Cont.

- Continue to follow up based on Administrators' timelines given
- Issue an order if required, post on the property and mail
- Follow up on expiry of the order
- Set up site visit with contractors if order not completed
- Remedy the property based on the orders requirements
- Apply all costs to the property tax account

Unsightly

Conditions that create health or safety risks can often be assessed using objective standards, the determination of what constitutes an "unsightly" property is more subjective in nature and may vary based on individual perceptions, community expectations, and context.

The concept of a property being "unsightly" is inherently subjective, as perceptions of appearance and aesthetics can vary significantly between individuals. As a result, determining whether a property is unsightly may be open to interpretation and can lead to inconsistent application unless supported by objective criteria.

Do we need additional resources?

- The MGA and WHRM policy provide clear direction for enforcement. Extensions are granted at the Administrator's discretion when property owners demonstrate ongoing progress toward compliance.
- Staff's preferred approach is to work with residents and encourage voluntary compliance rather than proceed directly to an order following an initial investigation. Reasonable extensions can support compliance while recognizing current cost-of-living pressures.
- However, should Council wish to adopt a more stringent enforcement approach, staff can bring forward policy amendments for Council's consideration.



Why do some of these files take so much time to complete?



A lot of time goes into the files from start to finish. Vacant or abandoned properties that may require demolition become increasingly difficult when property owners live outside the province or country and we must serve them notice. Furthermore, if they don't update their address or sell the property and the deed is yet to be recorded it adds significant more time. If the property requires demolition the necessary steps set out in the policy take a considerable amount of time. Furthermore, testing for lead paint and asbestos add to the timeline.



Questions?

