Gunnison County Community Development Department

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May 16, 2017

TO: **Board of County Commissioners**

FROM: **Crystal Lambert, Building & Environmental Health Official**

SUBJECT: **Follow-up to initial work session discussion of the 2015 Building Codes**

Purpose:
The purpose of this item is to follow up on an item discussed during the April 25, 2017 work session.

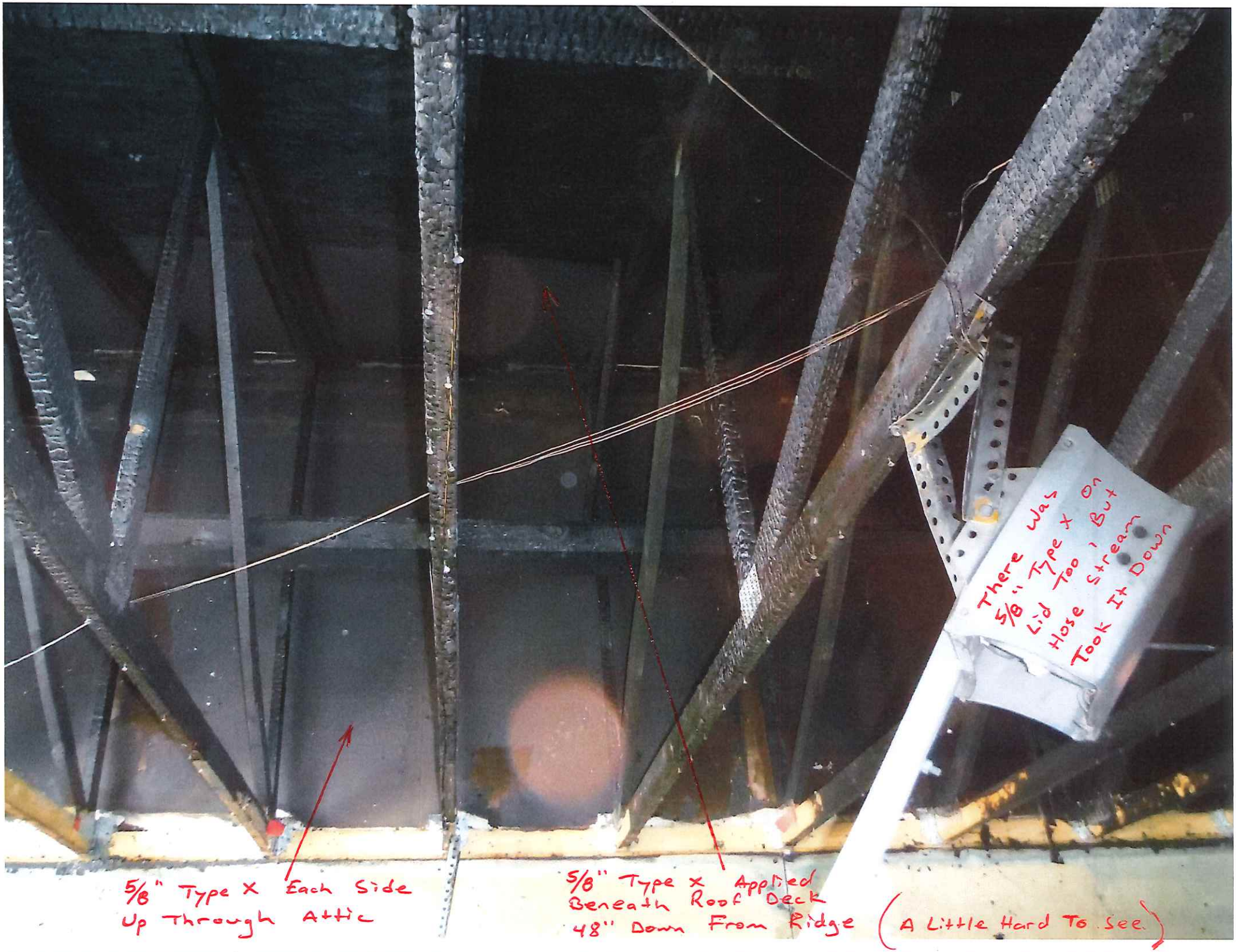
Background:
Staff recommended requiring the installation of residential automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new one- and two-family dwellings over 3,600 square feet in area. For two-family dwellings, the 3,600 square feet would be calculated as the aggregate of both units unless a two-hour fire wall is installed between the units. Staff also recommended requiring the installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems in all new townhome units. A review of Gunnison County's building permit records show that all townhome and two-family dwelling units have been less than 3,600 square feet in area. The International Fire Code identifies 3,600 square feet structures as needing more water for fire-fighting purposes than smaller structures. Larger structures can require additional fire fighters and water for suppression and may need more fire service than one tanker truck can handle. The distance occupants of larger structures need to traverse in order to evacuate can also be greater.

A recent fire in a two-family dwelling, without a sprinkler system, in the City of Delta showed that the fire wall assembly managed to contain the fire to one unit. Fire fighters were able to get to the scene and release hot gasses before the structure experienced a flashover event. The residential code, as written, requires a one hour rated party wall between the units and a one hour exterior wall for each townhome unit (essentially a two-hour wall or two one-hour walls). Structures the unincorporated areas of the County can take longer for fire fighters to reach than in the city. An additional hour of protection between two-family dwellings units can be achieved by an additional layer of sheetrock.

Recommendation:
Staff's revised recommendation is to delete the requirement to install residential automatic fire sprinkler systems in townhomes and two-family dwellings and to increase the shared wall of two-family dwellings to provide two hours of protection.

Duplex Fire 6:00 P.M. 4/26/17

Delta, CO


There was
5/8" Type X on
Lid Too, But
Hose Stream
Took It Down
5/8" Type X Each Side
Up Through Attic
5/8" Type X Applied
Beneath Roof Deck
48" Down From Ridge
(A Little Hard To See)

Neighbor's Property Was
Pretty Much Unaffected