



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

FIRE PREVENTION COMMISSIONER

1 BEACON STREET

JOHN A. O'KEEFE,
COMMISSIONER

MICHAEL A. MURPHY,
DEPUTY

HARRY E. LAKE,
SECRETARY

BOSTON,

July 21, 1915.

Hon. City Council
Cambridge, Mass.

Gentlemen:

The disastrous fire of July 20th, on Beacon Street, in the City of Chelsea, in which six lives were lost, and the dangerous fire of July 19th, in Hotel Wollaston, Quincy, are sharp reminders of the danger to life and property in allowing abandoned and dilapidated buildings to remain standing.

The Chelsea building, it is true, was neither abandoned, nor dilapidated: but the first and second floors were unoccupied and open to entrance. It was here that the fire was set. Exactly this opportunity for perverted minds, and this hazard, exist in the case of every dilapidated building situated close to dwelling-houses. The opportunity and the hazard should be removed.

The authority to remove such buildings rests with the Building Inspector. Action on his part may involve some expense on the part of the Municipality and for that reason he may hesitate to act. I suggest to your Honorable Body the wisdom of indicating to him that he may count on your support.

The splendid work accomplished in this field during the past year by the City of Boston, under its efficient Building Commissioner, and the fine work done in several other cities and towns should be a guide and a stimulus to us all.

I am enclosing a copy of the law governing removal of such buildings.

Very respectfully,

John A. O'Keefe
Fire Prevention Commissioner
for the Metropolitan District.

O/L. (Enc.)

ACTS OF 1913, CHAPTER 655.

SECTION 4. In a city or town which accepts the provisions of this section and the six following sections, or has accepted the corresponding provisions of earlier laws, the superintendent of public buildings or such other officer as the mayor and aldermen of such city or the selectmen of such town may designate shall be inspector of buildings, and, immediately upon being informed by report or otherwise that a building or other structure or anything attached to or connected therewith in that city or town is unsafe or dangerous to life or limb, shall inspect the same; and if it appears to him to be dangerous he shall forthwith in writing notify the owner, agent or any person having an interest therein to remove it or make it safe and secure. If it appears that such structure would be specially unsafe in case of fire, it shall be deemed dangerous within the meaning hereof, and the inspector of buildings may affix in a conspicuous place upon its exterior walls a notice of its dangerous condition, which shall not be removed or defaced without authority from him.

SECTION 5. Whoever is so notified shall be allowed until twelve o'clock noon of the day following the service of the notice in which to begin the securing or removal of such structure, and he shall employ sufficient labor speedily to secure or remove it; but if the public safety so requires and if the mayor and aldermen or selectmen so order, the inspector of buildings may immediately enter upon the premises with the necessary workmen and assistants and cause such unsafe structure to be shored up, taken down or otherwise secured without delay, and a proper fence or boarding put up for the protection of passers-by.

SECTION 6. If such owner, agent or person interested in such unsafe structure refuses or neglects to comply with the requirements of such notice within the time limited, and such structure is not secured or taken down as therein ordered, a careful survey of the premises shall be made by a board consisting in a city of the city engineer, the chief engineer of the fire department and one disinterested person to be appointed by said inspector of buildings, and in a town of a surveyor, the chief engineer of the fire department and one disinterested person to be appointed by said inspector of buildings. If there is no city engineer in such city or no chief engineer of the fire department in such city or town, the mayor and aldermen or selectmen, as the case may be, shall designate one or more officers or other suitable persons in place of the officers so named as members of said board. A report of such survey shall be made in writing and a copy thereof served on such owner, agent or any interested person.

SECTION 7. If such report declares such structure to be unsafe and dangerous, and if the owner, agent or person interested continues such refusal or neglect, the inspector of buildings shall cause it to be taken down or otherwise made safe; and the costs and charges incurred shall constitute a lien upon the land upon which the building is located, and shall be enforced within the time and in the manner provided for the collection of taxes on land; and such owner or interested person shall, for every day's continuance of such refusal or neglect after being so notified, forfeit to the city or town in which the structure is located not less than ten nor more than fifty dollars.

SECTION 8. An owner or interested person who is aggrieved by such order may have the remedy prescribed by sections two, three and four of chapter one hundred and one of the Revised Laws; but the provisions of this section shall not prevent the city or town from recovering the forfeiture provided in the preceding section from the date of the service of the original notice, unless the order is annulled by the jury.

E Communication
from Fire Prevention Commissioner
relative to abandoned buildings

August 1915.

In Board of Aldermen August 12, 1915
Referred to Committee on
Public Property
Sent to the Common Council for consideration
August 12, 1915 City Clerk.