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RIVERDALE - False alarms trouble Fire Dept.

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - November 10, 2008)

RIVERDALE - False fire alarms are a concern for borough officials but they may not be able to fine violators unless changes are made.

During the Nov. 3 Borough Council meeting, former Fire Chief Pat Cleary said many of the alarms generally come from the Rock Creek and The Grande at Riverdale developments. These alarms can arise from a variety of problems but they are primarily triggered by bad detectors or someone who pulls the alarm, Cleary said.

A smoke machine that was operated at a party activated three of the eight alarms that were called in over Halloween weekend, Cleary said. Every time a call comes in, the Fire Department must respond.

"You are putting that apparatus on the road. There is a chance of an accident and you are burning fuels. We try not to send everything up there. The chief gets up there first and can hold everything back," said Cleary.

Frequent alarms also increase complacency, which was another concern for Cleary.

"One of the officers notified me that when there is an alarm, nobody leaves the building, and he is concerned that when there is a real fire and you are putting the firemen and the policemen in harm's way when trying to get people out," Cleary said.

Borough officials are looking to do more to regulate how false alarms are enforced.

Currently there isn't an ordinance that allows the borough to properly issue fines to property owners that are responsible for false alarms.

Councilman Joseph Falkoski recently reviewed the regulations and concluded, "There is nothing in there that enforces them to be the catalyst in collecting the fines."

Council President Paul Carelli asked if the department talked to the property owners about this.

Cleary said he is considering discussing the false alarm problem with homeowner's associations in the two developments and has spoken to a local seniors group about the problem in general.

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