

# Gorham to require a permit for leaving a home vacant

[pressherald.com/2026/03/04/gorham-to-require-a-permit-for-leaving-a-home-vacant](https://pressherald.com/2026/03/04/gorham-to-require-a-permit-for-leaving-a-home-vacant)

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Opponents of Amazon coming to Gorham packed Town Council chambers March 3. The proposed Amazon warehouse was not on the agenda, but a multitude of residents aired their opposition during the public comment segment. (Robert Lowell/Staff Writer)

Occupancy permits have long been standard. But now, in a twist, owners of a Gorham home will need a town permit upon leaving, if no one is living in it.

The town is clamping down on vacant and abandoned buildings, especially houses. The Town Council Tuesday unanimously approved an ordinance, 7-0, regulating conditions of empty houses and no one from the public spoke about the issue.

The purpose given for regulating unoccupied properties is to prevent “significant and costly problems for the town. Vacant and abandoned buildings are an impediment to neighborhood redevelopment and rehabilitation, decreasing property values and prevents neighborhood stabilization.”

The town's definition of a vacant building is "any building or other structure that is unoccupied by a person or occupied by unauthorized persons for 180 days."

Town Councilor Charles Hamblen wondered how the town will identify properties that are vacant, "unmown lawns."

Town Manager Ephrem Paraschak said vacant buildings would likely come to the attention of code enforcement through complaints or from police issues such as kids breaking into a building. He said the code officer would not actively search for violations.

Evidence of unoccupied buildings include doors and windows boarded up, trash strewn on the property and deterioration that would constitute a threat to public health or safety.

Homes of active military personnel, resort facilities or those owned by vacationing "snowbirds" are exempt.

Under the ordinance, unoccupied buildings would be required to be watertight and measures taken to prevent entry by "birds, vermin, and trespassers." Other requirements include undamaged roofs, a storm drainage system, sanitary conditions, ratproof foundations, weather-coated or painted exterior walls, and walkways safe for pedestrians.

Code enforcement could issue a work order to repair vacant buildings that do not conform to town standards.

The measure the council approved does not indicate cost of fines for violations or the fee for a permit.

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An application for a permit requires name, address and contact information, in addition to the name of a property manager responsible for "management and maintenance of the property," along with 24-hour contact information.

Requirements also include an inspection before a permit is issued. Permits are valid for one year and once expired must be reapplied for.

A sign provided by the code office is required to be posted on the front door of a property and contain the name and contact information of the owner. Hamblen had concerns about posting a sign highlighting the property as vacant for the wrong people like those who might target the house, for example, to steal copper pipes.

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