

Summit passes resolution against overcrowding, illegal tenants in city

**By Kevin J. Kessler
Managing Editor**

SUMMIT — It's getting a little crowded in Summit, according to members of Common Council.

At their last meeting on Sept. 4, Council unanimously passed a resolution that asks state officials to amend a law which states that fire departments can only inspect four family homes for over crowding. The resolution is requesting that the law be changed to say that fire departments can now inspect two family homes as well.

Michael Vernotico, 2nd Ward councilman and safety committee chairman, presented the ordinance

town to prevent overcrowding.

Another costly issue that came up was the effect overcrowding has on schools.

"I believe we are currently paying to educate children in our public schools who are not Summit residents," Vernotico said. "We cannot afford to provide free education to non-residents."

Vernotico referenced Summit's high property tax rate and increasing class sizes to strengthen his point.

Council President Diane Klaif agreed with Vernotico's plan.

"Anything we can do to improve the safety of our residents is worth

and strongly feels that illegal overcrowding is a serious safety hazard.

Vernotico stressed that houses that are overcrowded, or have illegal basement apartments, have a high probability of safety issues in the event of an emergency.

"In Summit, our biggest issue with overcrowding comes from two family houses," Vernotico said. "I think that this will be a valuable tool in making sure that you don't have three or four families living in a two family house."

Vernotico also pointed out that many towns in New Jersey have already passed resolutions which require tenants to register with the

it," Klaif said. "I enthusiastically support it. I think over crowding is a serious issue and I will bet it's bigger then any of us imagine."

Now that the resolution has been passed, a copy of it will be forwarded to state Senator Tom Kean Jr. and Assemblymen Jon Bramnick and Eric Munoz.

It is Council's hope that these three representatives will fight to get the law amended. Vernotico is also hoping to expand this idea into other communities that are facing the same problems with overcrowding.

"This is a problem in other communities as well," Vernotico said. "It is not just a Summit problem."