Transparency in Third-Party Fire Inspection Reporting Fees

The Town of Black Mountain requires inspection, testing, and maintenance (ITM) reports for fire protection and life safety systems. These reports are required by the North Carolina Fire Code and are essential for ensuring buildings in our community remain safe and compliant.

The electronic reporting platform charges a standard fixed fee per report submission. This fee is set by the platform and is the same for all contractors. It is intended only to support the reporting system used by the Town.

The Fire Marshal's Office has identified instances where contractors invoiced property owners for a "Compliance Engine" or "reporting system" fee that was higher than the actual platform fee, without itemizing or disclosing any additional administrative charge. This practice creates confusion for business owners and gives the appearance that the Town or reporting platform is charging more than is required.

This ordinance does not regulate the overall pricing of contractor services. Contractors remain free to determine their own fees for inspections, labor, travel, and administrative work. Instead, the ordinance ensures:

- Accurate representation of the actual third-party reporting fee
- Clear itemization of any additional contractor administrative charges
- Transparency for local businesses so they can distinguish between required reporting fees and contractor service fees

In short, the ordinance prevents a contractor from labeling a charge as a Town or platform fee if it is not.

The ordinance regulates truthful labeling and documentation of required reporting fees, not private business pricing.

The benefits of the adoption of this ordinance will:

- Protect Black Mountain businesses from misleading fee descriptions
- Promote fairness and consistency among contractors
- Strengthen transparency in Town-required compliance processes
- Provide the Fire Marshal with a clear enforcement mechanism when fee misrepresentation occurs.