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|  | **OFFICE OF THE** **CITY COUNCIL** |  |
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**TWICE AMENDED**

**NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES for April 3, 2014**

April 24, 2014

5 p.m.

1. **Amended to change the date to reflect that there will not be a regularly scheduled Blight meeting on May 1 because of the fifth week.**
2. **Amended to explain the Environmental Quality Division’s role in inspecting carwashes.**

**Location:** Don Davis Room, City Hall, 117 West Duval Street.

**In Attendance:** Chair CM E. Denise Lee, CM Jim Love, CM John Crescimbeni, CM Lori Boyer, CM Warren Jones, Paul Martinez, Intergovernmental; Alex Pellom, Emergency Preparedness; Lt. Larry Jones, JSO; Sgt. David Oliver, JSO; Brent Trauger, resident; Mark and Amanda Searle, residents; W. Tom Mallett, EQD/ERD; Terry Carr, EQD; John Shellhorn, EQD; Ricarla Jackson, UNF; Kendra Mervin, UNF; Daphne Colbert, COJ; Sherry Wilson, Parks & Rec; Lisa Darnall, JTA; Aleizha Batson, COJ/PAO; Bryan Mosier, MCCD; Kimberly Scott, MCCD; Calvin Burney, JPDD; Debbie Delgado, PAO; Dave McDaniel, Public Works; Kenny Logsdon, JPDD; Leta Stever, resident; Roger Brown, Florida Times-Union; Jeff Foster, PWSWD; Leandrew Mills III, Available Pest Control; Kirk Sherman, Council Auditor, Paige Johnston, OGC; and Dan Macdonald, District 8 ECA.

CM Bill Bishop and CM Dr. Johnny Gaffney ad excused absences.

The meeting was called to order at 10:10 a.m.

Jim Robinson reported on the final stages of preparation of the April 5 Tire Buyback event.

Paul Martinez gave an update on the PR segment of the event and presented a flier that will be handed out to everyone bringing tires and signs stating when regional hazardous waste events will be happening. It was suggested by CM Jim Love. CM John Crescimbeni made a motion that the Neighborhoods database be used to target announcements of the regional hazardous waste pick up dates to neighborhoods in the targeted areas. It passed 3-0.

John Shellhorn and Terry Carr of EQD presented a PowerPoint presentation on mobile carwashes and how they can be regulated. Much of the regulation of these facilities comes from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. Mr. Carr noted that Duval County does not require permitting to discharge water directly into the soil. However, if runoff water is traveling along the city’s storm water system the car wash is out of compliance. ~~When such a violation is cited, the carwash must cease and desist operation immediately and cannot re-open until it is in compliance~~. **At such time, EQD can request that the operator cease and desist immediately until the discharge is properly contained.**

CM Lee asked that zoning be used to regulate the carwashes. Her issue is that the carwashes serve as hangouts and provide a place for drug sales. She formed a carwash subcommittee chaired by CM Crescimbeni and to include CM Love to look into regulating mobile carwashes. CM Lee suggested that because mobile carwashes cannot use more than 4,000 gallons a week, CM Lee suggested a regulation that operators have their own separate water meter rather than tapping into another source like a neighboring business or home.

CM Lee congratulated the Florida Times-Union for its continued coverage of the blight issue and especially for the editorial that ran on the day of this meeting.

Lisa Darnall of the JTA presented new versions of the driver bus stop condition form and the break room poster that will encourage drivers to be on the outlook for blight. It’s hoped that a monthly prize will encourage greater driver participation in this effort. Both the form and poster were approved by the committee. Karen Bowling asked that the committee discuss a news article about bus stop crime in other cities at the next meeting.

CM Lee asked that the JTA get with each committee member to arrange a time to ride the bus around town to get firsthand experience of the blight that can be spotted on buses.

Alex Pellom introduced UNF Masters students who presented a PowerPoint on literature concerning urban blight. Findings included:

* Tire buy backs take care of the symptoms of blight but are not a cure.
* Adopt a home program in neighborhoods encourage neighbors to tend to foreclosed or abandoned homes to keep the entire neighborhood looking neat.
* Some cities offer incentives for new people to move into foreclosed homes.
* Not every abandoned home can be saved and that those that are structurally challenged should be torn down.
* Neighbors need to hold neighbors accountable for blight conditions on the local level.
* Urban farming is an approach to make use of vacant lots and help alleviate food deserts in urban areas.
* Art projects help reduce blight.
* Cleanup makes blight move to another area of the city.
* Education in the schools is an important weapon in fighting blight.
* Government needs to partner with other agencies like the JTA and Chamber of Commerce.
* Enforcement needs to be strict and consistent.
* Blight elimination needs to be part of urban planning.

The Committee thanked the students for the presentation and expressed interest in their future findings.

CM Lee asked that every city council member prepare a list of 10 streets in their districts or around the city that they find that is in regular need of mowing. Due to a previous appointment and the meeting running past noon, CM Lee excused herself at 12:05 p.m. CM Love took over as chair.

Dave McDaniel, Mowing and Landscaping acting Division Chief, gave a report on the status of hiring for that division. He expected it to be completed within the next two weeks.

Robert Prado, Code Enforcement, played the recorded robo call script for snipe sign violators. At 28 seconds in length, it could make 900 calls per business day. The purchase of additional robo call machines was discussed in case volume exceeds capacity of a single machine. Discussion moved to creating an ordinance to use robocalls and snipe sign enforcement as to the advertisement of one-day garage sales and lost pets. Cherry Shaw of OGC will be asked to attend the next meeting to draft legislation for robocalls.

CM Lori Boyer wants the blight committee to look into illegal boarding houses in single family zoned property. There is a nuisance house in her district that has illegally paved over the right-of-way to create a parking lot. This issue will be taken up at the next meeting.

It was agreed that there would not be a blight meeting on May 1 because it is a fifth week.

During public comment Springfield residents Mark and Amanda Searle complained of an excessive amount of Municipal Code notices of violation being placed in their neighborhood. Mr. Searle passed out before and after pictures of his yard that have been notified and CM Crescimbeni said he couldn’t tell which photo was the before and which was the after. It was explained that this sweep is part of the City’s Operation Blight tactic to get rid of all blight in the city. Such sweeps will be conducted throughout every neighborhood in the city. CM Crescimbeni described the effort as a ground war against blight. CM Boyer said through this effort the city will find out what parts of the municipal code needs to be changed because it may be overly broad and restrictive.

Amanda Searle complained that urban gardens in Springfield had been cited. She said new zoning needed to be developed to designate urban gardens. One of the reasons she was cited was for having tires on the property. The tires are decorated by children and used as planters. However, current code does not allow citizens to build a storage shed on the otherwise vacant property to store the tires and other gardening tools, she said.

Leta Stever said that the current methods are too harsh and heavy on a community that is trying to re-establish itself. CM Love explained the appeal process for the Notification of Violations.

Brent Trauger, an Arlington resident complained about the automated garbage trucks and how the system fails to pick up items that do not fit in the bins. CM Crescimbeni explained that appointments can be made to pick up over-sized items and appliances.

Minutes packet includes: Meeting Notice, Sign in sheet, audio CD.