

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**AD HOC COMMITTEE ON JACKSONVILLE’S NEIGHBORBOOD BLIGHT**

**May 7, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

**117 W. Duval St., 1st Floor**

**Lynwood Roberts Room**

**Attendance:** CM Denise Lee, CM Bill Bishop, Karen Bowling

**Excused:** Council Members John Crescimbeni, Johnny Gaffney, Warren Jones

**Also**: Janice Billy – Council Auditor’s Office;Peggy Sidman – General Counsel Office; Dan MacDonald – ECA District 8; Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Lee called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m.

CM Lee began the meeting with introductions from the committee and attendees. She provided a brief description of Neighborhood Blight and Human Blight Ad Hoc Committees.

**Old Business**

1. **Taylor Field Road** – The initial concern was the collection of trash inappropriately deposited due to trucks inability to travel on the road to the homes. Ms. Sidman reported that the land developer, Solid Waste and JEA have put forth a collaborative effort to the resolve issue. Mr. Curtis Hart reported that there has always been very limited access to the existing homes which prevents the garbage trucks from servicing the residents. He stated along with developing the area with an additional 197 single family residents; there will be paved roads and an improved trash collection site. Additionally, Mr. Hart is working with the postal service to relocate the mailboxes closer to the subdivision. The trash compound is under construction and will be completed upon receiving the specifications from the Solid Waste Department. **CM Lee requested Mr. Hart provide a written report of his oral statement to the committee.** Mr. Jeff Foster, Solid Waste, reported that the department will be reviewing the construction plans (lot layout) to determine the configuration of the collection site. He commented that letters will be sent informing residents that a multi-family Solid Waste user fee will be assessed for the service. Mr. Calvin Burney, Planning Department, suggested that language is added to Section 656.407 of the Code which will require new developments to ensure proper road access for emergency vehicles and municipal services. Legislation to amend the Code is required to implement this action. Mr. Burney reported that staff will begin reviewing subdivision plats for accommodation of emergency vehicles and municipal services through any streets or rite of way access leading up to the development. Mr. Burney confirmed that this action could prevent future blight issues in new developments. **CM Lee requested Ms. Sidman begins drafting the legislation with the committee members as the sponsor(s).** David Edwards, JEA, reported all that inspections were completed upon contact from Code Enforcement. Several residences were deemed to be in violation and services disconnected. It should be noted that violations may range from safety concerns to permitting issues. **CM Lee requested a status report on whether the disconnected homes are in compliance and electricity restored**. Ms. Sidman concluded that the Taylorfield issue has been resolved. There are two preventive measures being implemented through legislation and an existing process.
2. **Carwashes** – CM Lee explained that there is an issue with car washes popping up in neighborhoods. There have been several complaints of possible illegal activity at various locations. The intent of the committee is to determine how to regulate car washes without hindering legitimate businesses. There were five violations (running water into unauthorized location) presented to EQD. Ms. Sidman reported that the timeframe associated with the violations was immediate. There were additional visits made to the locations and with no further issues noted. She commented that Terry Carr has developed a checklist of improvements as a tool to assist departments with handling car washes. Mr. Burney provided a summary of car wash zonings and permissible requirements in the Code; and a comparison of zoning regulations from neighboring cities. He suggests that EQD, OGC and PD are allowed an opportunity to meet to discuss possible supplemental regulations and recommendations for the committee. CM Lee commented that legislation needs to be drafted to update the Code. **Mr. Burney will make a report at the next meeting.** Mr. Terry Whisler expressed his concerns about the committee’s intentions/actions impacting legitimate “self-help” businesses. He requested that the preamble of any legislation originated that the recognition of the City’s endorsement of self-help activity be encouraged rather than a very heavy handed response to legitimate businesses. Committee members shared that the intent is to address concerns in our community and provide resolutions**.**
3. **Hazardous Waste Collection Locations –** Mr. Jeff Foster reported that Solid Waste currently develops dates for household hazardous waste remote events in September and October of each year. Once the dates are approved, information is sent to Public Affairs Office to be publicized approximately three (3) days before the event along with distribution to COJ media update list which contains about 800 recipients. SWD added an additional three (3) events to the traditional six (6) remotes. The locations for the remotes are Normandy Boulevard, Mandarin Park, Oceanway Park, Ed Austin Regional Park, Jacksonville Beach Public Works Department, and Blue Cypress Park. It was reported that Commonwealth Avenue’s facility is free for residents of Duval County Tuesday thru Saturday; and has a small quantity generator that can accept materials from small commercial businesses for free. CM Lee suggested that remote locations are needed throughout the City. She stated that Mr. Foster needed to get with Aleizha Batson, Public Relations Office, to develop a promotional piece for informing community about hazardous waste collection and Commonwealth site. **CM Lee requested that Mr. Foster report on the potential eight remote sites and the publicity recommendations at the next meeting** Mr. Foster shared there were several suggestions for promoting the events to educate the community. It should be noted that all PSA must be reviewed by the committee. Mr. Foster also reported that two arrests have been made in the Adams Street area regarding illegal dumping.
4. **Robo Calls –** Mr. Robert Prada reported that telephone numbers posted on illegal snipe signs would be added to the auto dialer system 24 hours after Code Enforcement Officers confiscate the sign. A pre-recorded message will call the number every 45 minutes to inform the violator of issue. The calls will end upon the violator reporting to Municipal Code to resolve the matter. Mr. Michael Rooney provided a power point presentation of the process for Robo calls. The cost analysis for this system is $10-15k. **CM Lee requested that Mr. Prada provide report on fines**. It was suggested that the address of Municipal Code to the automated message. **CM Lee stated that all departments are expected work with Public Relations Office on anything that will be presented to the public. Ms. Billy and Ms. Bowling were requested to seek possible funding for sources to implement this project.** Further action on this item is deferred until the next meeting.
5. **Mowing Division Update –** Mr. Dave McDaniel provided a comprehensive plan overview and implementation status summary. Some of the standards of service improvements will include assigning inspectors to each CPAC; reconciling existing maintenance site data with Real Estate Division of City owned parcel inventory; cemetery maintenance; creating bid documents for a county wide tree inventory; and subcontracting services. The responsibilities of two inspectors for the entire City has grown to twelve employees to better serve the community. Mr. McDaniel shared that master inspection forms have been created to assist with reporting violations which will address blight issues quicker and more efficiently.
6. **Sunshine Concerns regarding Bus Trip –**Ad Hoc Neighborhood Blight Committee, as an advisory body, will be conducting an inspection trip via a bus ride to view various blight locations. The committee will not discuss any information that may come before the body for action. The committee will have a notice meeting after the bus trip to properly discuss their findings/observations. The trip is scheduled for May 22nd. **CM Lee requested that Ms. Bowling and Mr. Jim Robertson work together to determine the most blighted locations for the trip.**

These items were not covered and tabled for next meeting.

* Update on Public Works plan for short/long term goals (Public Works/Solid Waste)
* Discuss shortening time it takes for department to report violations to Regulatory Compliance

**New Business**

This item was not covered and tabled for next meeting.

1. Discussion about advertising or informing neighborhoods prior to a Code Enforcement sweep to allow homeowners time to mow lawns and bring property into compliance prior to inspections

CM Lee commended citizens for being involved in cleaning up Jacksonville. She shared comments from emails received and publicly recognized Ms. Melody Shacter for her time and dedication in gathering information about Arlington area blight. Ms. Shacter spent hours interviewing residents, attending meetings and driving around. CM Lee shared that the community engagement is what is needed to help clean up Jacksonville and increase the quality of life for all citizens.

**Public Comments**

Mr. Stanley Scott expressed concern about the hazardous waste remote locations are not throughout the City. He believes that the committee should be careful in its approach as it relates to car washes. He stated that job creation has to be a component in addressing blight issues.

Ms. Jeneen Sanders wanted to know who will receive the volume of calls from the Robo- Call system.

Mr. Jay Higbee shared his concern about students having to walk through blighted areas. He has spoken with the family of A. Jackson and Ms. Wright with Duval County School Board. He is awaiting a response from Dr. Vitti about the school’s plans to assist in cleaning up around the area. He expects to report at the next meeting.

Ms. Alison Good made suggestions related to the Robo-Call system: 1) add the area code for individuals from out of town; 2) offer online pay option for the fine; and 3) obtain additional information from number or warrant for name and address to send a bill in case caller blocks incoming calls.

Mr. James Breaker expressed his concern that individuals would not get a warning first before receiving a fine. He commented that his neighborhood was being inundated with the car washes and his association would like an opportunity to discuss concerns with CM Lee.

Mr. Eddie Diamond, Jr., expressed his concern for the seriousness of blight in the community and the importance of using liaisons within the community. He expressed this strong support of CM Lee and the committee.

**Announcements**

Mr. Van Dyke, JTA, reported that 115 bus stops were identified with tremendous popularity and use which contributes to trash. An ordinance through the Blight Committee allowed JTA to purchase 115 trash cans. 60 will be delivered next week.

The Human Blight Committee is underway.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:44p.m.

Yvonne P. Mitchell, Council Research Division (904) 630-1679

Posted 05.13.14 6:00 p.m.