

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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

**STAND UP FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SUBCOMMITTEE AMENDED MINUTES**

**June 13, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Don Davis Room**

**Attendance:** CM Denise Lee (Chair), CM Warren Jones, CM John Crescimbeni,

**Excused:** CM Bill Bishop, CM Jim Love

**Also**: Robert Campbell – Council Auditor’s Office;Paige Johnston and Cherry Shaw – 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 9:12 a.m.

CM Lee began the meeting with introductions from the committee and attendees.

CM Lee recommended that everyone read the Times Union article that highlighted the City’s efforts to address blight. She explained the purpose of the subcommittee in addressing human blight in the City along with providing meeting information for Neighborhood Blight.

**Old Business**

1. **Update on streamlining lien and foreclosure process – Paul Tutwiler**

There were approximately 50 properties in the targeted area listed under $5,000 that are not forced to the tax sale policy by the Property Appraiser’s Office. The committee has agreed to review best practices of other cities that have addressed this issue. It was determined that many of the properties have excessive liens and fines that exceed its value. Additionally, some lots may be undevelopable. The committee discussed creating a flowchart that would list the various properties and challenges. At the next meeting, the committee will be discussing strategies to address properties according to its specific challenge. Another topic of discussion will be possible disposition methods of properties without being a financial strain to the City. CM Jones commented that the City should move forward with foreclosing on properties to systematically get properties back on the tax role. CM Jones plans to attend next meeting. Ms. Paige Johnson explained that the State law requires action be taken on properties valued over $5,000. Therefore, it is a policy call and the City has not actively pursued action against properties under $5,000. She furthered stated that committee has been debating the pros and cons of batch foreclosures vs. individual foreclosures. As mentioned above, many of the properties have various liens that may exceed its value; therefore, it is necessary that title reports are completed on properties to determine the method of foreclosure. The cost per title search is $150. Ms. Johnston commented that it was possible to acquire a discount on grouped searches. The committee will be discussing this further. **CM Jones requested that Mr. Kirk Sherman provide a cost comparison of Public Works in house maintenance and subcontracting maintenance of these properties to include the cost of Code Enforcement visits to site violations. The committee is charged with continuing discussions and developing a permanent plan for the City.**

1. **Report on the efforts and amount of cooperation JSO is obtaining in gathering Trespass Authorizations – Chief Pat Ivey & Asst. Chief Tony Davis**

The information in this section pertains to actions of JSO with the businesses and homeowners. Chief Ivey explained that there is an official no loitering sign issued by JSO. Individuals loitering outside of businesses that have the sign properly posted are subject to arrest. JSO encourages businesses to partner with them. In some cases, homeowners and businesses may sign a Trespass Agreement to assist with unwanted individuals in vacant homes or at businesses. If a trespass agreement is signed, JSO can arrest the individual without any further cause.

Chief Ivey provided a detail report on the Top 10 problem schools in the City. The presentation categorized schools by the number of violent incidents; number of property incidents; and combined incidents. The incidents counted occurred beyond the 1,000 foot buffer around the school. Chief Ivey requested that media be responsible in forwarding the information to the public. It should be noted that crime does spill over from school issues. However, the violent crimes that occur beyond the buffer are neighborhood issues. The schools on the list are throughout the City and not in one particular side of town. There is more property incidents reported than violent crimes. Chief Ivey gave a brief update on truancy contacts. He requested that citizens contact JSO non-emergency number (630-0500) anytime they see students on the streets during a regular school day. A simple call could divert possible criminal activity of the students. JSO will respond, complete a Field Investigative Report (FIR), and return student back to school. Clarification was provided about the process of narcotics complaints getting priority through JSO’s DART (Drug Abatement Response Team). All calls are designated according to the amount of detailed information provided that determines the ranking of that compliant. Chief Ivey stated that there is pending investigation on a list of five stores that allow truancy near schools. Thus, he could not provide the list of stores or school names at this time. **CM Crescimbeni requested a report on the response time for truancy calls. CM Lee requested Chief Ivey provide an update on the cease fire initiative and status of cameras for the next meeting**

There was some discussion about the various quadrants within the City, specifically to the boundaries of the Northwest quadrant and Midwest quadrants.

Asst. Chief Davis provided a detailed update on Trespass Authorizations. There were 71 properties identified in designated area. Letters were sent and phone calls made in an attempt to contact owners. To date, there have been three responses. Many of the 68 properties with no response are owned by banks, other entities or owners live out of town. Asst. Chief Davis explained that officers have made personal contact with some owners explaining the request for a trespass authorization. He reported that a few owners decline to cooperate. It should be noted that these owners do not live in the community where the blighted property is located. **CM Lee requested a form listing the 71 properties along with methods of contact and result of contact. CM Lee requested Ms. Johnston research the course of action that the City. CM Lee appointed Karen Bowling to head up committee to address policy change to address non-compliance of owners in regards to Municipal Code and Trespass Authorizations.** Asst Chief Tony Davis has partnered with BP Gas Station on Edgewood and the strip center on Bunker Hill. Both locations have signed agreements and JSO is actively working the sites. There have been arrests made. **Asst. Chief Davis will provide an update on both locations at next meeting.** Highlights of Operation Cease Fire were provided. There are still two more operational periods and neighborhood contacts are continuing.

1. **Report on update on demolition ordinance determining if properties are legitimately for sale – Cherry Shaw**

CM Jones explained that committee met to find language in the Ordinance that would allow the City to demolish properties that were vacant two years without providing opportunity for loopholes by the owners. Ms. Cherry Shaw further explained that any property that was boarded up and did not have any active electric or water service for two years or longer. The language referencing whether the property was for sale was removed. **CM Lee requested that the ordinance list all the members of Blight Committee as the sponsors.** Ms. Shaw reviewed the changes of the proposed ordinance on pages three and four for clarification. She confirmed that this ordinance applies to residential, commercial and industrial properties. There were some concerns from JEA to change language to all utilities. However, the committee felt that this could all for inclusion of phone, cable or other forms of utilities.

Motion/2nd move to approve propose ordinance (Crescimbeni/Jones) Approved 3-0

Motion/2nd move to full City Council (Crescimbeni/Jones) Approved 3-0

**Minutes**

Motion/2nd move to approve May 16th minutes (Jones/Crescimbeni) 3-0

1. **Follow up on the Status of property 13th Street and Moncrief Road resulting from a June 2 inspection. - Robert Prado**

Mr. Prado reported that three properties owned by Fred Clark have been citedfor various violations including unsafe structure that threaten the health of occupants. The last inspection on June 2nd determined that none of the violations were corrected at the residences/duplex units. Mr. Clark informed the Code Enforcement Officer his priority was to clear the violations at his store first. The store violations still persist. Due to non-compliance, all cases have been forwarded to the Special Magistrate for a hearing. The first available agenda date is July 22nd. One of the properties was issued a 30 day order the Special Magistrate on May 13th to correct violations. Mr. Clark did not attend the hearing. The fine hearing is scheduled for July 22nd on this property.

1. **Discussion about the blighted conditions at the Amoco Convenience store at 45th Street and Avenue B. – Robert Prado**

Mr. Prado stated that property was cited on May 15th. Based on the inspection conducted on June 11th all violations have been corrected. The property will be monitored by the division to ensure continuous compliance. Mr. Ed Safar, property owner, expressed concern that he had not received any previous notification of City issues at this location prior to two weeks ago. He informed the committee that he is against loitering and has instructed all of his employees to contact JSO if there is a problem. **CM Lee requested that Mr. Safar assist with deterring loitering by obtaining the official sign from JSO for all his stores; look into getting camera for surveillance outside the stores; partner with JSO with the Trespass Authorization; and improving the attractiveness of his building.** Mr. Safar welcomed assistance from JSO and agreed to meet with Asst. Chief Davis. There was extensive discussion about rezoning the property as a PUD. Mr. Huxford will meet with Mr. Safar to work with him concerning the logistics and benefits of the PUD for the property. **Mr. Huxford will present an update at the next meeting.**

These items were not covered and table for next meeting.

* Status of implementation of Neighborhood Database. (Daphne Colbert)

**Public Comment**

Mr. Israel suggested that the City consider subcontracting participants of Jacksonville Youth Works. CM Lee explained that subcontracting is done through a bidding process. She suggested that he contact Public Works.

Mr. Clarence Fredrick expressed his concern for youth and the importance of the community getting involved. He stated that Jacksonville Youth Works is always open to assistance from the community.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

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

Posted 06.25.14 2:30 p.m. Amended