

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**STAND UP FOR YOUR NEIGHBORBOODS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**June 27, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Don Davis Room**

**Attendance:** Council Member Denise Lee (Chair), Warren Jones (arr. 9:56), John Crescimbeni (arr. 10:11)

**Excused:** Council Members Jim Love and Bill Bishop

**Also**: Kirk Sherman – Council Auditor’s Office;Paige Johnstonand Loree French– General Counsel Office; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Dan Macdonald and Kevin Kuzel - ECAs

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Lee called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m. and began the meeting with introductions from the committee and attendees.

Chairwoman Lee made opening remarks about the recent spate of shootings and the increasing media attention to issues of violence in the city. She urged City employees to work together and communicate across agencies to deal with these problems and urged citizens to organize themselves, their neighborhood associations, their community and civic groups, their churches, and other organizations to focus attention on the city’s problems and to advocate for solutions. She believes a theme and campaign is needed to galvanize the public to action.

Minutes

The minutes of the committee meeting of June 19, 2014 were deferred in the absence of a quorum.

Surveillance cameras

JSO Assistant Chief Tony Davis reported on the status of purchasing surveillance cameras to erect in high crime areas. Several vendors of cameras and the Shot Spotter company will be meeting with JSO’s Chief Ivey in the next week to discuss available technologies and costs. Chairwoman Lee said that Sheriff Rutherford has previously said that forfeiture funds can be used to purchase that equipment. She requested a report from JSO by next week with an estimate of the time frame for purchase and installation of the cameras and with an update on the number of locations that have been identified for installation. Allison Good suggested that the JSO surveillance camera purchase be combined with the Public Works Department’s illegal dumping camera purchase to get the best price. Robert Flournoy pointed out that criminals will very quickly identify where cameras are located and will simply move to an unmonitored location nearby. He suggested that the “revolving door” of arrests and releases will continue until fundamental societal problems are solved in areas of education, employment and economic opportunity. Gracie Metcazler reported that she has been the victim of several crimes including burglary and identity theft and urged the community to get organized to fight back against organized criminals.

Loitering and criminal activity – Edgewood Avenue and Bunker Hill

Assistant Chief Davis said that JSO has met with the BP gas station business owner and has secured his cooperation with posting no trespassing signs and preventing loitering. The JSO is applying extra effort to monitoring the strip shopping center at Edgewood and Bunker Hill and has made several arrests and reduced loitering at that location. They are checking to see if all of the businesses in the center are properly licensed for the business they are conducting.

Unlicensed businesses

Cheryl Corley reported that her neighborhood has been trying for several years to shut down an unlicensed business on Atlantic Boulevard without success. The City has levied fines and imposed liens, but the business continues to operate with apparent impunity. Council Member Jones noted that there is a flaw in the City’s internal communications process among the Tax Collector, the Planning Department and other permitting agencies that sometimes allows businesses to obtain various permits without meeting all of the proper requirements, so businesses end up operating when and where they shouldn’t be. Loree French of the Office of General Counsel explained a change several years ago in the state law that provides that a Tax Collector may not refuse to issue a business tax receipt based on the failure of the applicant to meet some requirement of local ordinance or regulation. Warren Jones was appointed Chair of a subcommittee on business licensing and permitting. Kimberly Scott explained the problems caused by the change in state law and the failure of business owners to recognize all the steps in the permitting process and all the permits they need to operate a business lawfully. Robert Prado, Chief of Code Enforcement, reported that his office has made extensive enforcement efforts on several businesses that fall under this category of operating illegally without the proper permits and the process is long and difficult. One business is currently ignoring a court order to cease an illegally zoned activity.

Kimberly Scott explained that the Zoning Code does not permit the City to shut off electric service due to a zoning violation; it can only cut off power for a fire code or building code violation. Ms. Lee requested Paige Johnston to assist Mr. Jones’ subcommittee in drafting legislation to provide a mechanism to shut off the power to businesses that are operating illegally.

JSO truancy response

Assistant Chief Davis reported that average response time from dispatch to arrival for a truancy call is 13 minutes, and the average time from initial call to officer on scene is 24 minutes. 51% of truancy cases were citizen-generated and 49% were officer-initiated (officer personally witnessed the juvenile out of school). JSO received 8,472 calls for juvenile services in 2013 and 2,807 truancy field investigation reports were written.

No trespassing initiative

Assistant Chief Davis presented a table of the properties that have been sent letters regarding no trespassing authorization letters and which have responded positively or negatively or have not responded. Seven property owners have agreed to allow the trespass authorizations. Several confusing situations with regard to property ownership were identified, including owners who have died without wills and properties in foreclosure where the owner thinks the lender has taken title to the property. This impacts on who is legally authorized to sign the trespass authorization form. Allison Good said that often banks delay foreclosure and don’t take title because they don’t want to be responsible for it, but the owners, who haven’t paid their mortgage in some time, believe they’re not the owner any more. She suggested that perhaps a quit-claim deed process could help clarify ownership in these situations. Paul Tutwiler said that Jacksonville Area Legal Aid has done some research on this issue and recognizes the problem it presents. Ms. Lee asked that this information be considered by Council Member Love’s foreclosure subcommittee. Loree French said that the courts are becoming more sensitive to these issues and are trying to settle cases but the

45th Street Amoco station PUD

Gary Kresel of the Planning and Development Department reported that Folks Huxford has attempted to communicate with the property owner about the idea of rezoning the gas station to PUD but has been unsuccessful to date. Paige Johnston noted that the City cannot impose a PUD zoning on a property owner without his/her consent, but can initiate a rezoning to any other classification. Ms. Lee requested that Ms. Johnston begin drafting a rezoning ordinance to another category to begin the process.

Future topics

Council Member Jones requested that the committee examine the issues of junk vehicles in yards and regulations on placement and storage of garbage and recycling containers.

Council Member Crescimbeni asked if the Blight Committee had been reappointed for the next Council year; no official extension has been issued by incoming President Yarborough, but it is expected to happen. Ms. Lee thanked all of the participants in the process to date, both City employees and interested citizens, for their participation and hard work and contributions to the committee’s work. She thanked CAO Karen Bowling for the cooperation of all the City agencies that are taking on tasks to deal with the various issues that have been identified thus far.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:28 a.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division (904) 630-1405

Posted 06.27.14 12:00 p.m.