

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**STAND UP FOR YOUR NEIGHBORBOODS**

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**July 25, 2014**

**9:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Don Davis Room**

**Attendance:** Council Members Denise Lee (Chair), Greg Anderson, John Crescimbeni (arr. 9:44), Warren Jones, Jim Love

**Excused:** Council Members Bill Bishop and Bill Gulliford

**Also**: Council Member Lori Boyer; Council Member Reggie Brown; Karen Bowling – Mayor’s Office; Janice Billy – Council Auditor’s Office;Paige Johnston– General Counsel Office; Dan Macdonald and Kevin Kuzel – ECAs; Yvonne P. Mitchell – Council Research Division

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Lee called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m. by engaging the audience in an enthusiastic verbal chant regarding everyone participating in cleaning up Jacksonville. The meeting began with introductions from the committee and attendees.

**Minutes**

Motion/2nd to approve June 27, 2014 minutes Anderson/Love (4-0)

**Surveillance cameras by JSO – Chief Pat Ivey**

Chief Ivey reported from the law enforcement perspective, the utilization of surveillance cameras with Public Works could not comingle. JSO cannot allow PW to review video recordings that may have narcotic or other criminal transactions due to legal restraints. Chief Ivey commented that he provided additional information to Mr. Jim Robinson to better assist PW with obtaining the best system for surveillance. He suggested a system that includes video although it is more expensive. The location of the cameras for JSO are target specific for high crime areas. Chief Ivey will be providing his recommendation to the Sheriff on 7/25/14 at 1:30p.m. The expectation is to begin utilization of the cameras within 60 days pending the approval from the Sheriff and installation of equipment. The cameras will be funded from the Criminal Investigative Funds Account. CM Anderson inquired about prevention in relation to advertising a neighborhood being a safe zone because of the cameras. Chief Ivey referenced that cameras will initially be used as a covert operation. He commented it is better to publicize a safe zone once the neighborhood dynamics have changed from the apprehension of violators and successful prosecution.

It should be noted that any illegal dumping activity captured on the JSO cameras will be reported to the designated officer with PW. **CM Lee requested a written update on cameras for the next meeting.** CM Crescimbeni reported that QStar has a discount available for purchase of multiple cameras. Additionally, he shared that a concern from a state official regarding privacy issues with cameras. Chief Ivey stated there are challenges to utilizing surveillance cameras; and sensitive issues of privacy are being addressed.

**2014-427 Overview - Cherry Shaw**

Ms. Shaw clarified the proposed legislation does exempt historic properties although a definition of historic properties will be added. This legislation adds a new subsection listing non-historic structures that are boarded up and have no active water or electric service exceeding 24 months as unsafe building or structure. There was some discussion about the mothball process and extending it citywide versus just historic structures. Ms. Shaw commented that changes would be made to allow acceptance of mothball procedures citywide. She explained the City currently has a lengthy process involving demolition. Therefore, this legislation will begin the abatement process for demolition of unsafe structures after 24 months of inactive water or electric service. She noted that the determination can be appealed prior to demolition which could take up to two years.

Although a building is eligible to be considered historic at 50 years or older, it may not have the designation. The City Council designates property to be historic landmark on the recommendation of the Historic Preservation at the request of the City or property owner. **CM Lee requested CM Jones schedule at meeting with Ms. Shaw and Mr. McEachin to discuss policy regarding structures that are 50 years or older**. A report should be provided at next meeting. CM Boyer suggested the subcommittee review the inventory list from the Historic Preservation to assist with discussion. CM Boyer and CM Brown agreed to work on subcommittee. This meeting will be noticed.

**Restoration vs. Demolition Presentation – Kay Ehas**

Ms. Ehas stated she is a current board member of Riverside Avondale Preservation and an employee with Property Appraiser’s Office; however, she was presenting as a citizen and advocate for Jacksonville neighborhoods. She prepared a power point presentation which manual copies were provided. The main points of the presentation covered location and effects of demolitions within the City; density of urban neighborhoods; importance of housing developed; accomplishments of a non-profit organization; and alternatives to demolition. The presentation highlighted Council Districts 7, 8, and 9. Ms. Ehas is opposed demolition and requested the committee to reconsider 2014-427. It was suggested that investment in restoration ad revitalization as a solution for urban neighborhood problems. There was extensive committee discussion after the presentation. Several points highlighted were:

* necessity of neighborhood organizations by owners/investors
* options to address criminal activity
* research funding through Project Rebuild
* Tampa revitalization presentation to committee
* coordinating policies and services already in place within the City

**New Business**

The committee agreed to table new business to allot time for discussion on presentation and public comment.

**Public Comment**

Mr. Lloyd Washington represents COPOCA (Coalition of Presidents of Community Associations) which currently has 18 community presidents. He provided a brief overview of COPOCA’s purpose. Mr. Washington supports 2014-427.

**Terrence Allen**

Mr. Allen has concern that Prisoners for Christ is continuously turning homes into shelters. He would like action to stop or restrict ex-offenders from being in neighborhoods because it isn’t safe. CM Brown commented that this is a state issue but research is being done to gathering possible solutions from the City aspect. **CM Crescimbeni requested that Mr. Allen remain after meeting so that he could provide him copy of Florida Statute.**

**Janice Hightower**

Ms. Hightower supports 2014-427. She commented that some of the problem is investors buying up property, making minimal repairs and allowing anyone to rent the property. Many of the renters are conducting criminal activity out of the homes and neighborhoods are being negatively affected. She would rather see vacant lots than to deal with criminal activity and infestation of rodents coming from these properties.

**Ramonda Fields**

Ms. Fields commented that there were two separate issues: 1) housing; and 2) criminal activity. She doesn’t believe that demolishing houses would resolve the criminal activity in the neighborhood. Her suggestion is to consider other alternatives.

**Hosea Small**

Mr. Small supports 2014-427. He mentioned that many of the issues regarding these homes are due to the lack of commitment from the investors. He would like to see murder and blight decrease in the neighborhoods.

**Doretha Tompkins**

Ms. Tompkins represents Riverview Neighborhood Association. She voiced concerns about the growing number of vacant homes within the neighborhood that aren’t being maintained (overgrown weeds and rodents) and used as dump sites for furniture/beds. Ms. Tompkins reported concern about the garbage bin collection. The bin sizes aren’t adequate enough. Additionally, the garbage collector halfway dumps contents of bin inside truck which leaves trash in street. Ms. Tompkins reported on one occasion she stopped the driver and requested he re-dump the bin provided she collected the trash dropped in the street.

She supports 2014-427.

**Celia Miller**

Ms. Miller stated there is a need for demolition; however, 2014-427 needed to be more specific about historic properties without designation before she could support the legislation. Ms. Miller will be submitting a report to the committee regarding the history and issues within her neighborhood.

**Paul Tutwiler**

Mr. Tutwiler explained revitalization of areas such as Springfield and Riverside Avondale involved more than the restoration of homes. The status of the neighborhood economics changed due to increase of more affluent home owners. Additionally, he commented that some homes should not be preserved solely on bases of age of 50 years or older. Mr. Tutwiler supports 2014-427.

**Kim Pryor**

Ms. Pryor shared statistics from the National Association of Home Builders website regarding the cost to build a new versus restoring/renovating a house. She commented that criminal activity in neighborhoods is not caused by the houses; and tearing down sound and potential historic structures is not the answer. Ms. Pryor provided a brief overview of Preservation SOS (Save Our Springfield) and listed recent projects. This is a 501c3 private organization.

There was discussion about investors’ lack of responsibility in taking care of properties in other neighborhoods that significantly contribute to the blight issues and some of criminal activity. **CM Lee requested documentation regarding citations of Ms. Pryor’s personal properties be admitted into record.**

**Evie McCoy**

Ms. McCoy commented her property has been falsely cited various times by Code Enforcement. She has spoken with Mr. Prado to resolve issue with no success. Her concern is that according to Statute 163.340, a greater number of violations negatively impacts the tax roll and affecting the sale of her property. Ms. McCoy stated the zoning of her property has been changed from CCG1 to CCG2 without her knowledge. She reported difficulty with receiving requested information from Code Enforcement and made allegation that documents received have been altered.

CM Lee commented she understood Ms. McCoy’s frustration; however, she noted that it is against the law for City employees to alter public documents. Mr. Prado reported Code Enforcement has not altered any documents. All citations regarding Ms. McCoy’s are valid and she is currently in violation. There have been some changes to the property; however, enforcement continues because of complaints from the neighborhood. Mr. Prado gave update on complaint from Ms. McCoy regarding a neighbor last month. The property was cited. There was an inspection on July 24, 2014. The violation is about 80% clear. Mr. Prado reported speaking with the property owner. If tenant doesn’t have violation cleared within next fifteen days, the property owner has assured Mr. Prado to clear it himself. **CM Lee requested Mr. Prado to meet with Ms. McCoy after the meeting to write down all her concerns for the record; and requested a packet regarding Ms. McCoy’s property for the committee.**

**Terry Whistler**

Mr. Whistler is opposed to 2014-427. He encouraged the committee to consider other alternatives to demolish. His concerns regarding the demolition legislation involves the days allotted for mothballing, elimination of certain processes, and protection of historic properties.

**Alison Good**

Ms. Good commented HUD has sent $38 million dollars to Jacksonville over past several years for the Neighborhood Stabilization Program. According to her research, after City of Jacksonville administered the funds less than 200 houses derived from $38 million. She distributed a formal letter from the Historic Preservation Commission opposing the legislation. Ms. Good opposes 2014-427.

**Lane Manis**

Ms. Manis shared that her property has been targeted previously by Code Enforcement for flowers. An appeal was filed and citation was overturned. Ms. Manis commented that the City cannot tear down its way out of crime. She is opposed to 2014-427.

**Jim Markusic**

Mr. Markusic commented the last thing he wants to see in his neighborhood is vacant lots. It is people that make neighborhoods vibrant. He suggested more citizen input and organization with working with the Sheriff’s Office to address concerns other than demolishing houses. Mr. Markusic opposes 2014-427.

**Notice & Agendas**

There was extensive discussion about notices and agendas for subcommittees. **Ms. Paige Johnston reported she would get with Mr. Dan Macdonald and make sure that a list of the subcommittees is posted on website. CM Jones stated the subcommittee meetings will be posted and will utilize the sign in sheets to inform citizens until posting concerns are settled.**

**CM Lee requested a report from Mr. Prada on 13th and Moncrief Road at the next meeting.**

**CM Crescimbeni offered to get Mr. Whistler an opinion from General Counsel regarding the revision of the public comment statute and provide him a copy of the statute.**

**CM Lee reported that public comment will be the last thirty minutes of each meeting.**

The next Stand Up for Your Neighborhood Blight meeting is scheduled for August 14, 2014 at 10:00a.m., in the Lynwood Roberts Room. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:28 p.m.

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

Posted 08.19.14 4:00p.m