

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**AD HOC COMMITTEE ON NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**October 8, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Lynwood Roberts Room**

**1st floor, City Hall**

**Attendance:** Council Members Denise Lee (Chair), Bill Gulliford, Greg Anderson, Jim Love, John Crescimbeni (arr. 11:15)

**Excused:** Council Members Bill Bishop and Warren Jones

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Lee called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the committee meeting of September 10, 2014 were approved as distributed.

**Old Business**

Media Campaign update

Aleizha Batson of the Mayor’s Office gave an overview of the latest outline of the blight web site, which will contain links to the Ad Hoc Committee on Blight and information on various aspects of reporting and fighting blight, including links for solid waste, recycling and household hazardous waste; snipe signs; CPACs, ShAdCos and neighborhood organizations; links to self-help resources; etc. Committee members made various suggestions about graphics, organization, content, and visual interest. Recommendations included providing the maximum information about how to comply with the Ordinance Code and regulations and an easy method for reporting illegal dumping, signs, and other forms of blight. Kim Scott, Director of the Regulatory and Compliance Department, recommended a link to the JaxGIS system by which a resident could fill in their address and be linked to information relevant to their neighborhood. The committee asked Ms. Batson to continue refining the site and populating it with data and to bring it back in 2 weeks for approval to go live.

Public awareness campaign – round 2

Paul Martinez, Director of Intragovernmental Services, presented elaboration of the themes and guidelines the committee approved at its last meeting. The campaign theme is “Jax is our City, don’t trash it” and a logo refinement were presented. The graphics and screen arrangement for the mobile application to be available by the end of December or early January were reviewed. Committee members made suggestions for potential illustrative photos of blight, particularly before-and-after photos and illustrations of blighted properties next door to well-kept properties to make the contrast. The idea of using photographs of community leaders displaying good behavior was suggested. Suggestions for publicizing the campaign and spreading the word community-wide included a trade show booth that could be on display at City and private events (i.e. Jaguar and Suns games, Jazz Festival, Home and Garden Show, Black Expo, etc.), JTA bus wraps, bus shelter signs, lamppost banners, and the like. Mr. Martinez presented several potential uniform designs that would give City workers a standard look and “brand” recognition and received feedback on the designs from committee members. Several campaign mascots were discussed, including several variations on a trash can character. The committee liked the Fight Blight tag line and suggested ideas for incorporating a boxing glove element to emphasize the “fight” concept. J. T. Loehngrt agreed to take the concept back to the school system to see how it might be incorporated in school programs. Chairwoman Lee suggested that the human blight element needs to be considered as well for possible incorporation in the campaign.

Administrative fines

The committee reviewed a list compiled by Kim Scott of the Regulatory and Compliance Department of 40 properties with the largest amount of accrued code enforcement fines. Chairwoman Lee requested CAO Karen Bowling to work with Ms. Scott to develop a way for the report to include the name of the property owner along with the address, which is not the case at present. Ms. Lee noted that Ms. Scott has informed her that property owners cannot pay administrative fines until the violation has been completely remedied, a policy with which she disagrees. She believes that fines should not be allowed to accumulate for years and years to amounts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars per property (tens of millions of dollars cumulatively) without foreclosure taking place.

13th and Moncrief property

Assistant General Counsel Cherry Shaw discussed the general issues involved in potentially forclosing on a problem property at the intersection of 13th Street and Moncrief Road but could not disclose details due to the possibility of future litigation. She did say that the City’s liens are subordinate to several other kinds of encumbrances, so the City’s possibility of recovering any funds is dependent on other claims with higher priority. With regard to the feasibility of going to court to have the property declared a public nuisance, Ms. Shaw said that she discussed the area’s crime statistics with the Sheriff’s Office and Code Enforcement and finds that the statistics don’t seem to meet the standard for such a declaration at this time. More information is being gathered on the site, which is only one real estate parcel but contains a store and seven duplexes with separate addresses that may have separate crime reports that need to be identified and compiled.

Chairwoman Lee urged everyone participating in the committee, departmental representatives, City Council, Office of General Counsel, JSO, and the general public, to exert their best efforts and cooperate to the maximum extent possible to achieve the desired end result and solve the blight crisis.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

Posted 10.20.14 4:00 p.m.