

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**STAND UP FOR NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE OF THE**

**SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE ON NEIGHBORHOOD BLIGHT**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**October 16, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Council Conference Room A**

**Suite 425, City Hall**

**Attendance:** Council Members Denise Lee (Chair – arr. 10:15), John Crescimbeni, Jim Love, Warren Jones

**Excused:** Council Members Bill Bishop, Bill Gulliford, Greg Anderson

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Crescimbeni called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

**Minutes**

Lacking a quorum, the August 27, 2014 meeting minutes were accepted as information.

**Old Business**

Neighborhood association database

Kenny Logsdon of the Planning and Development Department updated that committee on the progress of the department’s neighborhood association and organization database project. He noted that the department recognizes 6 categories of organizations in the database: business associations; condominium associations; faith-based organizations; homeowner associations; neighborhood associations; and others (subdivided into a further nine further categories). There are currently 1,806 total registered organizations in the department’s database, which changes on a frequent basis as organizations come and go. The database contains contact information on the organization’s leadership and assigns each organization to City Council districts and CPAC zones. The organization registration form is available on-line or by request to the Planning Department. Mr. Logsdon reported that some organizations don’t want their contact information made available online because companies use that information to make “cold calls” trying to sell products or services. The information is a public record and is made available in response to public records requests, but some organizations prefer that it not be automatically posted to the City’s web site.

Chief Pat Ivey of the Sheriff’s Office said that the annual meeting of the City’s Sheriff’s Advisory Councils (ShAdCos) will take place on November 18th and he will discuss with them whether they want to receive any information other than crime-related information. Some have said they do, some have said they don’t. Council Member Crescimbeni suggested a widespread publicity and recruitment effort to reach and invite organizations and individuals citywide to register with the Planning Department, including City television shows, information boards in City offices, public service announcements on commercial television and radio, etc. Chairwoman Lee suggested that the City do more outreach activity and requested that the Planning Department map the current organizations as a means of identifying where there are gaps in coverage.

Uniform method of collecting non-ad valorem assessments

Cherry Shaw of the General Counsel’s Office distributed a draft of potential legislation to implement a method authorized in the Florida Statutes to add certain types of assessments for nuisance and demolition liens to a property’s tax bill as a non-ad valorem assessment where the City has expended money to remediate problem properties. The new method, if approved, could take effect for the 2015 tax year. The committee discussed whether an amnesty period and education process would be advisable before implementation, at least for the interest on the lien. Kim Scott said that there is never an amnesty or forgiveness where City funds are expended. The City Council would need to adopt a resolution each year approving a specific list of properties and amounts to be levied. Coordination will need to take place between the City and the Property Appraiser and Tax Collector. In response to a question, Ms. Shaw stated that the full amount on the tax bill must be paid; a property owner may not pay some charges and refuse to pay other charges. In response to a question from Council Member Jones, Council Member Crescimbeni stated that his intent would be that all such authorized liens would be assessed every year, regardless of amount. It was suggested that the Property Appraiser include a notice in the September TRIM notice to properties that have applicable liens warning them that the new assessments will be imposed on the 2015 tax bill, thus giving them the opportunity to pay the lien before it is applied to the tax bill.

Allison Albert of Jacksonville Area Legal Aid said that the special assessment mechanism is a harsh one and may pose an unintended hardship on senior citizens and low-income persons who don’t have the means to pay off the liens in a lump sum, and would be precluded from entering into a payment plan if the assessment becomes a tax certificate. She suggested exploring an exemption for homesteaded properties, at least for the first year, in order to give these citizens an opportunity to arrange a payment plan over time before the lien becomes a non-ad valorem assessment. Council Member Crescimbeni urged extreme caution about doing anything that might raise an equal protection issue and requested Kim Scott to produce a report for the next meeting of all the properties that have liens, the amounts, and whether or not they are homestead properties.

Vacant property registry for bank-owned properties

Assistant General Counsel Paige Johnston stated that the registry was created by Ordinance 2010-327-E and is still in effect and gave a brief overview of the problem the registry was intended to resolve. She reported that other cities have had legal challenges to their similar registries and Jacksonville is interested in knowing how those cases were resolved and how those rulings might affect the legality of Jacksonville’s ordinance. Assistant General Counsel Steve Durden is doing research on the constitutionality of these registries and the legal uses of the funds collected for by the registry. Ms. Lee asked that this item be on the next meeting agenda and that Steve Durden be invited to make a presentation on this subject. Council Member Gulliford is looking at appropriate uses for these funds for anti-blight purposes.

45th Street/Avenue B Amoco station

As requested at the previous meeting, Planning and Development Director Calvin Burney distributed and discussed his draft letter to the property owner recapping the violations and the Blight Committee’s request for various improvements to the property. The City has drafted legislation to rezone the property from commercial to residential if the requested improvements are not made. The letter will be sent certified return receipt.

**Minutes**

A quorum having arrived, the August 27, 2014 meeting minutes were approved as distributed.

Certificate of use ordinance

Council Member Jones reported that a number of changes have been made in the ordinance since the committee’s last meeting to improve the ordinance. Still to be determined is who will be the enforcement agency – Municipal Code Enforcement or the Building Inspection Division. Paige Johnston explained the purpose of a COU and noted that, at present, the City does not have a penalty for failure of a property owner to obtain a COU or to comply with the conditions of a COU. The bill creates a penalty provision and provides for the issuance of a “cease and desist” order to halt an unpermitted use and authorizes a petition for injunctive relief.

Policy on structures 50 years of age or older

Council Member Jones will provide this update at the next meeting.

Surveillance camera update

JSO Chief Pat Ivey reported that the Sheriff’s Office has used its crime forfeiture fund to purchase parts for 20 camera installations and a few have been assembled and installed at undisclosed locations. The department plans to install cameras at the top ten “hot spots” for code violations as determined by JSO and CARE system data and to install others as needed in undisclosed locations for undercover operations.

**New Business**

None

**Public Comment**

A citizen thanked Code Compliance for their diligence in addressing a problem dump site in her community.

Chairwoman Lee thanked everyone for their continuing hard work on blight issues and asked City officials to continue to ride the streets, identify problem areas, and tighten up on enforcement and cleanup activities to ensure that problems are completely solved and don’t reoccur.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:29 p.m.

Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

Posted 10.17.14 6:00 p.m.