

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE ON JACKSONVILLE’S**

**NEIGHBORBOOD BLIGHT MEETING MINUTES**

**January 7, 2014**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Lynwood Roberts Room**

**Attendance:** Council Members Denise Lee (Chair), Greg Anderson, John Crescimbeni, Bill Gulliford Warren Jones (arr. 10:18am), Jim Love

**Excused:** Council Member Bill Bishop

**Also**: Cleveland Ferguson – Mayor’s Office; Peggy Sidman and Paige Johnston – General Counsel Office; Dan Macdonald – ECA Dist. 8; Robert Campbell – Office of Council Auditor’s; Yvonne Mitchell – Council Research

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Lee called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

The meeting began with introductions from the committee and attendees.

**Minutes**

Motion/2nd Move to approve November 19th – Crescimbeni/Gulliford (5-0)

**Old Business**

1. Status report on uses of chemical spray on right-of-ways – John Pappas

Mr. Pappas provided a detail report regarding current and improvement spraying plan. There are 87 out of 211 miles of outfalls currently being sprayed in the program. The spraying cost per year is $230,197. Identified challenges for outfalls and roadside ditches include keeping vegetative growth down to ensure flow capacity and better community quality of life adjacent to the facility; and assurance that all asset responsibilities are identified for ponds. The cost for the proposed improvement plan of $315,333 and is a reallocation from mechanical contractual account. It will cover the increased efforts to spray all 211 miles of outfalls and 471 miles of roadside ditches. The criterion for determining which outfalls are sprayed is accessibility to the area.

There was extensive discussion regarding importance of the City having more than one contractor. It was suggested offering bids to contractors in sections. This would allow more opportunities for smaller business owners to work with the City. In response to CM Anderson’s question, Mr. Dave McDaniel stated the chemicals for mosquito control and ditch/pond spraying cannot be integrated.

Assignments:

Meet with CM Lee to get specifics regarding map breakdown - John Pappas

* show 87 miles in map by districts

Meet with CM Gulliford about the contracting plan – John Pappas

Coordinate with Mr. Soares with DCPS to inquire about possible ditches in need of assistance around schools – John Pappas

Provide a cost breakdown of spraying per mile vs. mechanical – John Pappas

Provide a contracting plan presentation – Jim Robinson

1. Truancy Report – CM Anderson & Paul Soares

CM Anderson provided a brief explanation of the task of the subcommittee which was to conduct an analysis of to determine if there was a connection between truancy and crime rates. Mr. Soares reported that the schools identified were the top ten middle and top ten high schools based on the total number of documented truants. Although an expected correlation was observe between the truancy and crime rates, a simple linear regression analysis showed that truancy rates did not significantly predict crime rates.

DCPS in partnership with JSO conducts a truancy sweep every two weeks. The Truancy Hotline is (904) 390-2043. Mr. Soares shared information regarding several programs that focus on reducing truancy which include Save Students in Schools and Attendance Intervention Teams. In response to a citizen suggestion, Mr. Soares agreed to review the legal age for dropouts with the legislative team at DCPS.

1. Update on criteria, goals, and structure of Neighborhood Organizations & Vacant Registry – CM Gulliford

CM Gulliford reported the Neighborhoods Department has an established toolkit for starting a neighborhood organization. There have been several successful programs that engaged neighborhood involvement over the years but ended due to lack of revenue. In order to offer that same level of service, the committee suggested re-evaluating the uses of the Vacant Registry Fund. The subcommittee provided a list of possible uses of which 2 out of 9 are currently allowable (foreclosure intervention and meditation). The balance in the registry is $1.6 million. Anyone interested in participating in upcoming meeting should contact CM Gulliford.

Assignments:

Draft legislation regarding Vacant Property Registry to change fee and codify fund uses – Peggy Sidman

* include renewal fee
* provide information of top five cities comparable to Jacksonville utilizing registry
* include notice should be filed once property is in foreclosure and vacant

1. JALA report on Foreclosure Intervention Program – Allison Albert & Lynn Drysdell

Ms. Drysdell provided a detail explanation of the foreclosure intervention services. JALA has received $63,700 from the Vacant Property Registry. The funds go directly to customers except for a 10% administrative fee. It should be noted that a dedicate source of funding would be beneficial for JALA and its customers.

1. Report on Municipal Code Compliance process on handling complaints on businesses – Robert Prado

Mr. Prado reported on the current and improved procedures for commercial property inspections. Since November, Code Enforcement Officers require business owners to produce the Certificate of Use. In the event a business declines an inspection by Code Enforcement, an inspection warrant can be requested on valid observance of violation. The C.A.R.E system is used to transfer information with various departments. CM Lee requested a form letter be drafted to communicate between departments to follow up with various issues.

Assignments:

Follow up with logistics regarding the Tax Collector issuing the Planning Department a list of anyone obtaining a Business Tax – Cleveland Ferguson

Bring copy of form letter that are submitted to businesses – Kim Scott & Jim Robinson

1. Status report on bill 2014-553 (snipe sign legislation) – CM Love

CM Love stated TEU deferred the bill. The discussion involved reducing the amount of the first offense to $50 to minimize excessive penalty on common residential signs vs. commercial signs. CM Jones reported that the Rules Committee amended the bill to include an educational component to the general public prior to enforcement of new fees. The committee upheld its previous decision to increase the first offense to $150.

1. Jacksonville Children’s Commission Announcement – Paul Martinez

Mr. Martinez reported on the partnership with Children’s Commission in engaging youth in the fighting blight. During the months of Jan and Feb, After School Programs will conduct a contest to name the Fight Blight mascot. JCC will offer an ongoing project based learning activity along with updating their Green book to include the Fight Blight mascot.

**New Business**

1. Ditch complaint – Ms. Linda Pippin

Ms. Pippin shared her frustration regarding a ditch behind her residence (Golden Rod Circle East) and the lack of maintenance by the City. She commented that she has reported the overgrowth and debris to the City for over two years; and described her safety concern with rodents and snakes. Ms. Pippin contacted Consumer and Investigative Reporter Ken Amaro and was interviewed on 1/6/15.

Assignments:

CM Lee will follow up with appropriate departments.

**Public Comments**

Mr. Anino inquired whether the RFP process for mowing would be ready for the spring season.

Mr. Kevin Kuzel suggested the definition for snipe signs be well defined in the upcoming legislation.

Mr. Macdonald stated there was no meeting scheduled for Blight on 1/8/15.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

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

Posted 01.09.15 5:30 p.m.