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|  | **OFFICE OF THE**  **CITY COUNCIL** |  |
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**SPECIAL AD HOC COMMITTEE ON JACKSONVILLE’S**

**NEIGHBORBOOD BLIGHT MEETING MINUTES**

**July 22, 2015**

**10:00 a.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Council Chambers**

**Attendance:** Council Members Garrett Dennis (Chair), John Crescimbeni, Bill Gulliford, Tommy Hazouri, Al Ferraro, Jim Love, and Joyce Morgan

**Also**: Council President Greg Anderson, Council Members Reggie Brown, Danny Becton and Doyle Carter (arr. 10:51a); Paige Johnston – General Counsel’s Office; Rupal Wells – ECA Dist. 8; Darrin Mason – ECA Dist. 1; Robert Campbell – Office of Council Auditor’s; Crystal Shemwell - Legislative Services Division; Yvonne P. Mitchell – Council Research Division

See attached sign-in sheet for additional attendees.

Council Member Dennis called the meeting to order at 10:07 a.m. The meeting began with introductions of committee members and staff. Council President Anderson charged the committee to continue the efforts in fighting blight in Jacksonville. He requested a recommendation from the committee on the snipe signs and junk cars within the next thirty days.

**Introduction of Department Heads**

Ms. E. Denise Lee, Director of Blight Initiatives, provided open remarks which included the administration’s commitment to continue a cohesive partnership in fighting blight. After being introduced, department heads were given five minutes to provide an overview of their contribution to the fight blight campaign.

**JTA and JEA** are independent authorities that partnered with the committee throughout the year. Lisa Darnell provided an overview of JTA key activities which included repairing or replacing bus stop benches, purchase of new trash receptacles, and wrapping bus with fight blight message at no cost to City. The blight bus is in operation daily throughout Jacksonville promoting the campaign. Renee Goode shared that JEA assisted with distributing information to thousands of customers regarding the Tire & Sign Buyback event; and submitted data regarding properties with no services for the vacant property legislation.

Ms. Goode stated JEA would inquire an additional cost to extend services to receive City calls after hours or on weekends. Thus, JEA is unable to commit to providing this service. Additional dialogue included the possibility of extending customer service (630-CITY) operation hours. Further discussion will resume during budget hearings.

**Intra-Governmental Services** contributions included the Tire & Snipe Sign Buyback event and the overall campaign development of fight blight. Mr. Paul Martinez provided a power point presentation displaying the logo, headline, tagline, mascot and mobile application. He commented that fifty percent of the 25,000 to 35,000 calls a month received on 630-CITY are blight related. There are preliminary pricing and circulation discussions related to re-establishing the neighborhood magazine. A draft will be developed and provided to Director Lee for direction.

There was extensive discussion regarding waste tires, service fees and compliance codes. Det. Matsick discussed the tire reporting process for commercial entities.

Assignment

* Mr. Jim Robinson will provide CM Hazouri the specifics on the amount received regarding waste tires.
* Det. Matsick will look into a way for commercial shops to capture the number of tires leaving the property.

**JSO** has been involved with the Blight Committee the past two years. Undersheriff Pat Ivey provided information on the trespass warrant initiative on vacant properties; no loitering signs with neighborhood businesses; various crime studies; and surveillance cameras for illegal dumping. Undersheriff Ivey announced that Det. David Matsick has returned to his position in regards to illegal dumping. He stated that JSO is committed to maintaining the partnership with the committee because there is a direct connection between blight and the criminal element in the community. Chief Derrick Lewis will replace Undersheriff Ivey as the committee’s JSO liaison.

Assignment

* Chief Lewis will provide a report on number of calls of service and incidents for the parks in District 1 at the next meeting.

**Public Works Department** contributions to fighting blight include, but not limited to, organizing the initial “Operation Urban Blight”; providing the logistics for both Tire & Snipe Sign Buyback events; collecting and disposing of close to 2,000 tons of solid waste; and removal of hazardous trees from private lots. Mr. Jim Robinson discussed several other contributions by the Mowing & Landscape Maintenance, Solid Waste and Real Estate Divisions. Solid Waste was tasked with developing a brochure for residents. The committee has not approved the final draft.

Assignment

* Mr. Jim Robinson will provide the draft of the brochure to all committee members.

**Regulatory Compliance Department** has two main divisions which are Environmental Quality and Municipal Code Compliance that play a significant role in the blight initiatives. The Environmental Quality Division (EQD) assisted the committee with developing a more structured ordinance regarding car washes. Additionally, EQD was able to revise inspection forms that included interagency coordination and established quicker suspension dates for violations. Mr. Terry Carr distributed a handout which included EQD’s process improvement and future initiative called Adopt-A-Tributary. This is a program that engages community groups to cleanup creeks, streams and rivers to promote community pride. The Municipal Code Compliance Division (MCCD) has an integral role of enforcement in addressing blight and other conditions. MCCD has participated in numerous sub-committees and assisted in development/enhancement of new and current legislation. From Oct 1, 2013 through May 29, 2015, MCCD has conducted a total of 17,295 inspections; and issued 1,861 snipe sign citations resulting in $107,255 in collected fines. In response to a question, Mr. Robert Prado explained that illegal dumping on private property should be reported to MCCD; and illegal dumping on public property should be reported to Solid Waste Division.

**Duval County Public Schools,** another independent authority, participated in efforts to eliminate the appearance of blight from all schools. Each school was rated in four categories: fencing, landscaping, retention ponds, and exterior structures. Schools where problems areas were identified received corrective actions. In addition, Mr. Paul Soares participated on a truancy subcommittee to determine if neighborhood crimes were directly impacted by high truancy rates. In response to CM Hazouri’s inquiry, Mr. Soares stated that vacant schools are prep for sale to minimize blight of the property.

**Planning and Development Department** provides staff support to the committee in regards to review of plans, inspections, and proposed zoning changes related to blight. PDD has provided numerous staff reports and maps in conjunction with JSO. Mr. Folks Huxford commented the Housing and Community Development Division (HCDD) has been significantly involved with the committee on various issues. Ms. Caleena Shirley provided a brief overview of the Foreclosure Registry Appropriation Policy which was initiated by the Blight committee through legislation and enacted by the Council. Also, she stated that HCDD is in the process of focusing more on areas without neighborhoods organizations to strengthen the areas.

Assignment

* Ms. Caleena Shirley will provide a copy of the vacant registry process to the new committee members.

**Next Agenda**

Pending legislation – Paige Johnston & Cherry Shaw

**Moving Forward – CM Garrett Dennis**

CM Dennis charged the committee to engage in thoughtful dialogue and come up with real solutions to improve the quality of life for all people in every neighborhood. He requested the support of the members to change the name of the committee to the Special Ad Hoc Committee on Neighborhood Improvement and Community Enhancement. The committee members unanimously agreed to the name change. The final approval will come from the Council President Anderson.

The committee also agreed to switch meetings to Mondays at 4:00p.m. In response to CM Hazouri’s question regarding frequency, CM Dennis stated meetings will be held during regular committee weeks.

There being no public comment or further business, meeting was adjourned at 12:17p.m.

Yvonne P. Mitchell, Council Research Division

07.23.15 Posted 4:30p.m.