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

**NEIGHBORBOOD IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT**

 **AMENDED MEETING MINUTES**

**October 5, 2015**

**4:00 p.m.**

**City Hall**

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

**Council Chambers**

**Attendance:** Council Members Garrett Dennis (Chair), Bill Gulliford, Tommy Hazouri, Al Ferraro, and Joyce Morgan (arr. 4:06p)

**Excused**: John Crescimbeni

**Also**: Council Vice President Lori Boyer; Paige Johnston – General Counsel’s Office; Rupal Wells – ECA Dist. 8; Jenny Busby – ECA AL-3; Robert Campbell – Office of Council Auditor’s; E. Denise Lee and Latanya Peterson – Mayor’s Office; 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 4:02 p.m. The meeting began with introductions of committee. CM Dennis commented that committee meetings will transition back to the Lynwood Roberts Room after November due to standing reservations.

**Presentation from Office of Director of Blight**

1. Certificate of Use (COU)

Mr. Sean Kelly manages the process for COUs as the Zoning Administrator. He provided a thorough review, to include, historical background; definition; process of obtaining application; and extended policies and procedures to ensure enforcement. The COU Summary was distributed to the committee. The Tax Collector’s Office is currently informing citizens of the importance of applying for COU prior to obtaining a local business tax receipt to determine compliance of structure separate and apart. The issuance of a business tax receipt does not constitute approval for activity or wavier of any regulations. The division processes approximately 150-200 applications a month. Since the adoption of *Ordinance* 2014-724, enforcement of COUs has increased resulting in the reduction of the number of businesses operating out of compliance. In response to CM Dennis question, Mr. Kelly requested that legislation is amended in the future to allow Building Inspections Division to write paying citations and have more enforcement authority. Since January, Building Inspections Division has written 400-500 warning citations. Director Lee commented that further improvement of the COU process is a budgetary issue involving manpower versus additional legislative changes.

*Assignment*:Director Lee will work with the Planning & Development Department to discuss improving the COU process to be more practicable for small businesses.

2. Public Awareness Campaign

Director Lee reported that certain aspects of the campaign are still being processed. She will provide a full status report on all actions taken in the past 90 days which should include information on the appropriation of funds at the next meeting. As part of the promotional efforts associated with the campaign, JaxCan and the Fight Blight Application Booth will be at the Veterans Memorial Arena on Friday, Oct 9th for the NBA game. It is the priority of the administration to ensure that citizens are engaged and well informed about the various legislative changes made as a result of fighting blight.

**Eureka Garden Apartments**

Ms. Kimberly Scott reported Municipal Code Compliance (MCC) Division along with several other agencies conducted apartment/unit inspections at Eureka Gardens on Friday, October 2nd and Monday, October 5th. The complex has 400 units. A code officer made contact with every door. The two day operation resulted in 163 apartment units cited with violations; 235 apartment units refused entry or no response (appointment cards were left at residence); 2 citations issued for tenant violations; 7 junk vehicles were cited; and 2 nuisance cases were issued for exterior violations. She explained that inspections will continue pending calls from tenants to schedule appointments. Ms. Scott applauded Chief Derrick Lewis and JSO for being very responsive with assistance.

When Code Enforcement cites a property, it leaves a notice of violation on site and a certified notice of violation is mailed to the owner of record. To date, 113 notices have been mailed to Global Ministries, regarding the violations at Eureka Garden. The owner is given an opportunity to correct violations and schedule a re-inspection. If after 18 days and the violations have not been cleared, MCC will schedule hearings before the Special Magistrate.

Ms. Martha Cox, Family Foundations, assisted the tenants of Eureka Garden to compose a letter of concerns regarding the living environment. She commended the City, JSO and JFRD on its response to addressing the tenants’ issues. In addition, she stated the tenants remain concerned with the owner’s actions and the legitimacy of remedial work actually being done. The tenants have called another meeting which will be held on Monday, October 5th at Wayman Ministries beginning at 7:30p.m.

**Public Comments**

Fred Gardner obtained a COU two months ago. He shared he was well informed and that the process was great. Additionally, Mr. Gardner is the owner of two Subway Shops. He offered to assist with promoting the public awareness campaign through his shops. The shops are located at Merrill Road & 9A; and Yellow Bluff Road & New Berlin Road.

Scott Lara commended the committee on raising fees on snipe signs; however, without enforcement violators will continue cluttering the city with signs. He picked up approximately 70 signs over the weekend. He strongly encouraged the administration to double efforts in addressing enforcement. Additionally, Mr. Lara mentioned the retirement of Mr. Robert Prado with Municipal Code; and inquired how long it would take to fill the position.

Rosemary Thorntonexpressed concerns that committee hasn’t moved passed discussion related to signs. She suggested that the committee engage active neighborhood associations with conducting field property condition surveys. This survey could determine structures within communities that need exterior repair, minor repair or should be categorized as dilapidated.

Tracey Thorntonthe importance of utilization of art as a means for fighting blight. Additionally, she suggested committee develop a master plan to focus on two/three most blighted neighborhoods to work on forward motion. She would like to see the committee to move forward in addressing other issues instead of snipe signs.

The next meeting will be Monday, October 19, 2015 at 4:00p.m. There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 5:12p.m.

Yvonne P. Mitchell, Council Research Division Posted 10.07.15 5:00p.m.