



MINUTES
Committee on Public Safety
Wednesday, June 7, 2017 @ 4:30 p.m.
City Hall, Council Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Council Member Wood

ROLL CALL

Councilmember Adam Hussain, Chair – excused
Councilmember Carol Wood, Vice Chair
Councilmember Tina Houghton, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff
Joseph Abood, Chief Deputy City Attorney
Brandon Waddell, Assistant City Attorney
Heather Sumner, Assistant City Attorney
Susan Stachowiak, Planning & Neighborhood Development
Scott Sanford, Code Compliance
Alicia Banks
Gina Nelson
Wyatt Ludman
Elaine Womboldt
Kathy Miles
Paul Borroto
Drew Macon

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HOUGHTON TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM MAY 17, 2017 AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council Member Wood offered public comment at each agenda item, and there was no public comment stated at this time.

DISCUSSION/ACTION:

DISCUSSION – Signage Enforcement- Susan Stachowiak w/PN&D

Council Member Wood explained the concern with abandoned signs at businesses and asked Ms. Stachowiak to explain how enforcement was being done. Ms. Stachowiak acknowledged that if the violation is brought to their attention they pursue and have them removed. A letter is

sent, allowing them 30 days to correct the violation, and if they do not the City sends in a contractor to remove. She noted that one currently not in violation that has not been removed is the former Holiday Inn, and they are trying to work with the owner due to other issues. That current sign structure is okay, but the panels in that location are not. The structure is considered a billboard, and they have an MDOT permit for it, along with a document from the City allowing it.

Council Member Houghton asked about multi-tenants sites with individual damaged signs, and provided a location of Career Quest. (She stated she would provide a photo to Ms. Stachowiak). Ms. Stachowiak stated that 6 months after a business ceases to exist, it is defined as an abandoned sign. Council Member Houghton then asked about a pole with no panels, and Ms. Stachowiak confirmed the pole can stay as long as it is conforming.

Council Member Wood asked how many primary signs are allowed per property. Ms. Stachowiak answered that it would be one pole sign per property, unless on corner lot.

Council Member Wood then asked about temporary signs, and time frame. Ms. Stachowiak provided the information that it is one per 30 days in a calendar year, cannot be in the right of way and must be 5' from the main property line. Mr. Sanford added to the conversation that real estate signs are allowed 30 days after sale and a construction sign is allowed 30 days after completion. Ms. Stachowiak distributed a handout on what an illegal sign is. Ms. Stachowiak admitted that sign enforcement is non-stop because people put up a new sign once the old one is taken down. Enforcement cannot prevent but can only react. If there is a safety issue they address it ASAP. Council Member Houghton suggested using interns for enforcement however Ms. Stachowiak stated that interns want to learn the trade not do grunt work. The Committee, Ms. Stachowiak and Mr. Sanford held a discussion on repeat offenders. The discussion included the possibility of enforcement similar to the trash, grass and weed violations. Ms. Stachowiak admitted that currently the sign ordinance is not written in a way to enforce that way for repeat offenders or second notice fees. There was a concern that the tax payers are paying for the enforcement of repeat offenders, and the owners should be ticketed. Ms. Stachowiak acknowledged that when an abandoned sign is removed, it does go onto the owner's taxes. Mr. Abood stated Law would look into the ordinance and see if a fee can be added.

Council Member Houghton quickly referenced an issue with the complaint tracking program and inquired on training. Council Member Wood admitted leadership had attempted it, and Mr. Sanford said they are having issues and he was meeting with IT on June 9th about Lansing Connect. Mr. Sanford admitted that See Click Fix is active, however the City has nothing to do with it for internal posting, and they just gather the information from it.

Ms. Stachowiak asked for time with Law for additional amendments to the sign ordinance besides the ones noted later in the packet.

DISCUSSION – Trash and Weed Enforcement and Time Frame on Complaints-Scott Sanford w/Code Compliance

Council Member Wood stated that Council Member Hussain, who was excused, was looking for updates on the number of letters sent for grass, trash and weeds, and the timeline that was given to the violators. Mr. Sanford provided details; 37,329 notices were sent on premise violations, disabled vehicles, board-ups, and in FY 2015/2016 there were 1,561 disable vehicle notices and 143 cars towed. The department has to follow the State Disabled Vehicle Code, therefore even if it does not have a plate, it is not deemed disabled. There were 508 notices written and 62 vehicles towed in FY 2016/2017, and 150 tickets written. In regards to the trash violations, Mr. Sanford stated that there were 10,062 notices, and 1,355 sites

cleaned up in FY15/16. If it is written up more than once in a calendar year, they can be fined a second notice fee even in if compliance. In FY16/17 there were 8,170 trash notices, and they cleaned up 1,088. Regarding grass violations, there were 10,103 written in FY2015/2016 and 1,276 mowed. In comparison, in FY2016/2017 there were 8,860 notices written and the contractor mowed 1,184. Mr. Sanford informed the Committee that there is a set fee of \$265 for administration on anything the City goes out to take care of, and grass mowing is \$65 for one hour or less; with the trash clean up at a minimum of \$175. In regards to anything owned by the Housing Commission, they cannot charge an administration fee, but can charge them for the contractor fee. Mr. Ludman asked Mr. Sanford why the decrease in comparison over the two fiscal years. Mr. Sanford stated it can be seasonal, and they used to board up bank foreclosures, but now banks are taking care of their own.

RESOLUTION – Appointment of Alicia Banks; At Large Member to the Board of Fire Commissioners; Term to Expire June 30, 2021

Council Member Wood noted for all present that there are two vacant positions on the Board currently, one in the 4th Ward and one At-Large.

Ms. Banks provided information to the Committee on her lifelong residency in Lansing, and that she was approached by a current member of the Fire Board about the vacancy. Once she found out about the position, she was intrigued and excited to serve and was hoping to bring workforce development programs and partnerships as a goal for the Board. One example she provided was a joint venture with the Lansing School District on a career path for the Fire Department. Council Member Wood encourages her to also reach out to Code Compliance because they play a key role also under the Fire Department.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HOUGHON TO APPOINT ALICIA BANKS AS AN AT-LARGE MEMBER TO THE BOARD OF FIRE COMMISSIONERS WITH A TERM TO EXPIRE JUNE 30, 2021. THE RESOLUTION WAS AMENDED TO REFLECT THAT THE MAYOR'S OFFICE VETTED THE APPLICANT.

Council Member Wood first asked how Ms. Banks was going to reach out to the neighborhoods. Ms. Banks stated she plans to reach out to the schools and attend neighborhood meetings.

MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

RESOLUTION – Appointment of Gina Nelson; Fourth Ward Member to the Board of Fire Commissioners; Term to Expire June 30, 2020

Ms. Nelson provided a brief history on her 23 years of residency in the City and retirement from the State of Michigan. She also noted she had served on multiple board in the past including the Planning Board, Housing Commission, Big Brothers and Sisters, Political History Society Board and also the Downtown Neighborhood Association. Ms. Nelson stated her focus is going to be on the neighborhoods, and also plans to visit all of the Fire Stations.

Council Member Wood asked why her application stated she was interested in the Housing Commission. Ms. Nelson stated that application was from 7 years ago, and she was actually appointed to the Housing Commission at that time. Ms. Nelson stated she would stop in the Mayor's office before she left the building and complete a new application.

Committee asked that the resolution be amended to reflect that the Mayor's office vetted the applicant.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER HOUGHTON TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF GINA NELSON AS FOURTH WARD MEMBER TO THE FIRE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WITH A TERM TO EXPIRE JUNE 30, 2020. MOTION CARRIED 2-0.

RESOLUTION – Appointment of Wyatt Ludman; At Large Member to the Board of Fire Commissioners; Term to Expire June 30, 2019

Council Member Wood stated her concern that the position Mr. Ludman is being recommended for by the Mayor is currently filled (Tom Hoisington), and therefore she wanted to follow up with the person. Council Member Houghton asked if she knew whether or not that person had been notified he was not being reappointed. Council Member Wood stated that her understanding was there was some communication.

Mr. Ludman provided a brief background on himself, which included details on his family history in the Fire Department, his current work for a State Senator and State Representative, and desire to work at the local level of government where he believes most change occurs. Mr. Ludman told the Committee his plans if appointed to the Board would be to work on developing regional cooperation plans.

Council Member Wood informed Mr. Ludman that his appointment will be back on the Committee agenda for action at the next meeting on June 21, 2017 after she speaks to Mr. Hoisington. He was told he would not need to attend and Council staff would inform him of the results.

DISCUSSION – Citizen Police Investigation Position – Drew Macon

Mr. Macon spoke as the Chair of the Board of Police Commissioners on the current and future plans of the Citizen Police Investigation Position. Council Member Wood noted that the current investigator, Mr. Brantley did retire from the City and then was hired as a contract employee. She noted that the ordinance states it is the responsibility of the Police Commission to fill the position, so she asked for an update on the process.

Mr. Macon confirmed that Mr. Brantley is currently on contract, and the Board is actively working to revise the job description, have gone through the multiple iterations, and expect to take the current description to the full Board the week of June 12th at their meeting. Once the full Board is in agreement, they will meet with the HR Director to confirm the job description meets with the hiring practices and begin the posting. Council Member Wood asked if the position would be full time, and Mr. Macon confirmed he is asking for full time, and the position is housed with the HRCS department. The understanding with the Police Commission is that even though housed with HRCS, his first priority is to the Board of Commissioners and they have the right to tell him to work only on the Board items. Council Member Wood pointed out that the employee is currently doing work for HRCS. Mr. Macon acknowledged that the option is not to be an employee of HRCS, but just housed there. Mr. Abood added that being housed in HRCS does not make him an employee of the department, and his first duties are with the Board of Commissioners. Mr. Macon noted that one change in the new pending position is that the position will be required to participate in all trainings that police officers are required to participate in, along with one ride along per quarter, a day shift, afternoon, and a night's shift. Council Member Wood asked them to encourage the position to also participate in neighborhood meetings. Mr. Macon made note, and concluded that their goal is to post the position by July 1, and they will not allow a former LPD officer to fill the position and have investigator experience. Council Member Wood requested it also not be filled with a contract employee.

DISCUSSION – Medical Marihuana Moratorium

Mr. Abood updated the Committee on the progress of the enforcement, noting they are currently investigating nine (9), and a letter was sent requesting evidence documenting they were in existence before May 21, 2016. The business has a time line of 30 days to provide the information, and if they do not meet that deadline they will be notified of a violation which will be sent to the owner of the property and the lease holder telling them they have to close shop.

Council Member Wood asked for an update on the Home Occupation Task Force. Mr. Abood noted there are 8-12 members, they are meeting every week and moving in a positive direction.

Ms. Womboldt asked who to contact with complaints. Mr. Abood stated they can contact the City Attorney office.

Ms. Womboldt and Ms. Miles then spoke to the City Attorney about their concerns on the issue with odor, speaking in support of a nasal ranger. Ms. Sumner confirmed Law had looked into it, however it would not hold up in court. Mr. Borroto spoke to Mr. Abood on an issue with his neighbor that the City Attorney office is working on.

DISCUSSION – Window Signage

Ms. Sumner referenced the recent proposed ordinance amendment marked “Draft #1a June 6, 2017” noting she used the Downtown District as a template, and added it to the section of the ordinance that spoke to the City in general for office, commercial, wholesale and industrial districts. Exceptions were also added, she noted, and the Planning Neighborhood and Development office can deny or grant variances. Council Member Houghton asked how it would be implemented and enforced. Ms. Sumner referred the Committee to Code Enforcement for enforcing. Council Member Houghton encouraged an education piece and to be pro-active, at which it was determined that PND would want to be consulted on how they want to roll it out. Council Member Wood asked for more time to have further discussion with enforcement, and also noted she does not want to wait for Law to work with PND on the earlier mentioned comment on addressing all aspects of the complete sign ordinance.

Ms. Womboldt asked for enforcement on businesses where you can’t see in or out, and asked for a percentage of window coverage, and referenced a roller rink. Council Member Houghton noted it would depend on the type of businesses

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned 6:20 p.m.

Submitted by, Sherrie Boak,

Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved: June 21, 2017