



MINUTES
Committee on Public Safety
Thursday, March 3, 2022 @ 4:00 p.m.
City Council Conference Room, 10th Floor City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Wood called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm

PRESENT

Council Member Carol Wood, Chair
Council Member Brian Daniels, Vice Chair
Council Member Jeffrey Brown, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Renee Richmond, Council Staff
Lisa Hagen, OCA
Mary Bowen, OCA
Jim Smiertka, OCA – arrived @ 4:01
Scott Sanford, Code Enforcement
David Muelle, Demolition Board
Meredith Johnson, Code Compliance Officer
Jace Harper, WILX TV-10
Sarah Al-Shaikh, WLNS TV-6
Maria Koutsoukos, resident

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER DANIELS TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FEBRUARY 17, 2022, AS PRESENTED. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment at this time.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

Councilmember Wood moved the order of the items around to D first, then item C and B the last item.

ORDINANCE – Amend Chapter 696, Section 696.07 to provide requirements for owners of firearms to report the theft thereof and provide penalties for failure to make a report

Councilmember Wood informed the Committee the public hearing is set for 3/14/2022, a discussion with Chief Sosebee, Mayor Schor, and leadership they feel the passage of this ordinance is important. She continued if Committee approves to go to Council, the passage will be contingent on the hearing and if any issues arise, it will come back to Committee. Councilmember Wood added this is already a state statute, and it would assist LPD in the job. Mr. Smiertka stated that state law requires a person, once they know of the stolen firearm, they must notify the authorities within five days, what will this Ordinance require, and added will it be business days because if someone reports it on a Sunday what happens. Councilmember Wood added this needs to be fine-

tuned by the 14th, so we have everything ready and in place. Ms. Hagen stated she would reach out to LPD and get that rolling.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER DANIELS TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO AMEND CHAPTER 696, SECTION 696.07 TO PROVIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR OWNERS OF FIREARMS TO REPORT THE THEFT THEREOF AND PROVIDE PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO MAKE A REPORT CONTINGENT ON THE PUBLIC HEARING SET ON 3/14/2022. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

RESOLUTION – Orders to Make Safe or Demolish to the owners of property located at 2131 Pleasant View
Councilmember Wood asked Mr. Sanford if there was any change since the public hearing. Mr. Sanford said no contact or work has been done, there is no activity at the property, and taxes have not been paid since 2017. He continued his department recommends MSD 60 days.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER DANIELS TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION TO MAKE SAFE OR DEMOLISH TO THE OWNERS OF PROPERTY LOCATED AT 2131 PLEASANT VIEW. MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

DISCUSSION – Demolition Board Process w/David Muylle & Joe Vitale

Councilmember Wood introduced Mr. Muylle and the purpose of having him come to the Committee was to better understand their process and timelines and what they go through. She added by the time it reaches Council, it's gone through the demo board and this Committee, we've discussed the top three requirements on if permits have been pulled and paid for, financial means have been established and shown, and a timeline has been created that works with code. Councilmember Wood said if all these have been done the property owner is required to stay in contact with Code and report back monthly or sooner to make sure they are following through. Councilmember Wood also stated Ms. Hagen was asked to provide information on the state law which she has brought. The memo speaks to if a dwelling is unoccupied/vacant for a period of 180 consecutive days or longer and is not listed for sale/rent it can be deemed MSD, and thanked Mr. Muylle for coming.

Mr. Muylle explained he's been on the demo board since 2003 and stated what comes to the demo board is regulated by code compliance. The reality most of the time once it gets to the demo board the owner is beyond assistance, they will not have the technical, emotional, or financial means to do what's need. They are volunteers and represent the city but it's important that citizens are treated fairly. He continued the control of the demo board is they listen and then give either 30/60 days to come up with a plan, contractors, and the financing ability, it is 50/50 if they show and actually do it. The board typically run 300-500 tagged houses, but how many actually get to Council is different, they cannot speak to the timing it takes to get to Council or Committee.

Councilmember Daniels asked Mr. Sanford how long it takes to get to demo through Code, Mr. Sanford explained there is a list that has to be completed along with a title search, things with the county and they have no control over time, they've had a case that has been going on for two years because it's in litigation. Mr. Sanford continued that Code sends everything certified mail, all records kept on file, pictures, etc. and try to be as clear as they can, the process can take awhile with notifications, getting the owners/landlords in, OCA gets involved, if necessary, there are many steps. He also added it depends on if it is a rental or owner occupied, rentals they have leverage, owner occupied they may need to get courts involved and/or the health department depending on the violation.

Mr. Smiertka added that if it is owner occupied, they have to request for a search warrant and demonstrate to the court that it is a health/safety welfare issue, the other is to file a nuisance with circuit court. Councilmember Daniels inquired about hoarding issues, Mr. Smiertka replied if the hoarding is affecting the wellbeing and health and reiterating the memo Ms. Hagen compiled with the state statute definition on what constitutes a dangerous building.

Councilmember Wood asked Mr. Sanford to explain what the NEAT team is, Mr. Sanford stated this was established in 2009 and is the Neighborhood Enhancement Action Team, which is a monitoring system for tagged more than 90 days. Councilmember Wood asked if the requirements aren't being met what's next, Mr. Sanford replied they do a walk around the property to make sure its secure, grass is cut if needed, and a premise inspector goes out, if no work is being done, they set up for MSD. If work has began it goes back to monitoring and if requirements are being met the tag is removed, and he added that it is a deterrent as they have to comply with current codes. Councilmember Wood reference the Overview of the MSD they just passed, and Mr. Sanford added if the building is deemed a hazard, they can take down immediately, they have building safety take it to the demo board.

Councilmember Brown asked how code determines what properties are tagged, are they random, monitored by inspections or people calling in. Mr. Sanford stated they have 8-10 calls a week come in, some are tagged for utilities, one could get tagged on a Monday and cleared Wednesday. He continued they have 10 code officers in 9 districts with one floater, adding NEAT team properties are monitored by premise inspectors (one in every ward), on the website is a list and map. Councilmember Brown asked as a new councilmember are they in real time, if code had more staff would there be more tagged. Councilmember Wood reminded committee that 52% is rental and those go through inspection and seen more frequently, unless there is a reason for owner occupied those aren't seen as much. Mr. Sanford responded they drive around and can see after high winds, and people call with complaints. He stated approximately 55,400+ unites and there are 578 tagged, Council only saw the worse, their office wrote 77,000 last year.

Councilmember Daniels asked Mr. Muylle if it goes to demo is the city paying for it, Mr. Smiertka replied it is put on the taxes, and Ms. Hagen added it is part of the state statue. Councilmember Wood also added as an example, you own a house, and the city takes it down, you still own the house, Mr. Sanford said there is a fee charged by demo. Councilmember Daniels asked what the fastest/best way is to share an issue, is it Lansing Connect or a phone call. Mr. Sanford replied it gets to his office either way.

Councilmember Wood asked Ms. Richmond to send the contact list and map to the Councilmembers both electronically and printed, she acknowledged. She asked Meredith Johnson to come to the table, Ms. Johnson introduced herself, stated she's been with the City since 2015 and was just there to listen to the meeting. Councilmember Brown asked Ms. Johnson what trend she sees and why they are tagged, Ms. Johnson replied all variety but more tenant issues. Councilmember Brown then asked Mr. Sanford if he had data to show percentage on utility tags, he replied no as the NEAT team had created so many colored tags, but now they are limited on what they can pull from BS&A.

Councilmember Wood asked Ms. Richmond to pull the MSD they just did up on the screen, Mr. Sanford and Ms. Johnson went through different tabs showing Councilmembers Brown and Daniels what it looks like. Mr. Sanford informed them that they could always call they might have information that is not on the site and can give background.

Councilmember Daniels lastly asked Mr. Muylle how soon they see a demo of a property, Mr. Muylle stated they are a small cog in the wheel and are a buffer, once it gets to them Code as done everything. Mr. Sanford stated code sets the agenda and presents to the board and if no activity has been seen it moves to Council for referral. Mr. Muylle thanked the Committee for the invitation for input.

OTHER

1413 Woodbine

Mr. Smiertka spoke about 1413 Woodbine, it was brought to the attention of LPD, LFD and City Attorney's office by the neighborhood in Colonial Village. Mr. Smiertka state it is the worse house in terms of descriptions of drug activity, it's being used as a flop house, people being passed out on the law. Mr. Smiertka added that in the last six months LPD has had 19 calls to the address for people being stoned, loud music, cars driving across lawns, and code enforcement has been there 16 times. He continued that he believes back in December there was an attempted murder, and that the property is owned by a woman and her son lives there (he may be in jail currently).

Mr. Smiertka informed the Committee that they are working the case to calm things down, a letter was sent to the owner yesterday requesting a walk through with LPD. If she refuses, they will ask for a search warrant to obtain access. Councilmember Wood asked since there is drug activity have they done a nuisance letter, Mr. Smiertka said that was the next step. He added that the owner keeps promising to come up with a plan and never follows through, stating that one minute she says she is going to sell and then next she isn't.

Councilmember Wood stated Judges Buchanan and Ward, along with the Court Administrator will be at the next Committee meeting to discuss the bond process.

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 4:58pm

submitted by Renee Richmond,

Administrative Assistant, Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on March 17, 2022