



MINUTES
Committee on Public Safety
Tuesday, March 21, 2023 @ 3:30 p.m.
City Council Conference Room, 10th Floor City Hall

CALL TO ORDER

Council Member Hussain called the meeting to order at 3:30pm

PRESENT

Council Member Adam Hussain, Chair
Council Member Carol Wood, Vice Chair
Council Member Ryan Kost, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Renee Richmond, Council Staff
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, OCA
Matt Staples, OCA
Jim Smiertka, OCA
Barb Kimmel, EDP
Shelbi Frayer
Kim Coleman, HRCS Director
Joe McDonald, Housing Ombudsman
Jessica Martin, LPD Social Worker
Katie Deihl, Captain LPD

MINUTES

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER WOOD TO APPROVE THE MARCH 7, 2023, AS PRESENTED.
MOTION CARRIED 3-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mitch Rice from Nation Outside shared a couple handouts and highlighted the support for the Fair Chance Housing Ordinance.

Norma Bauer spoke on a study done at MSU and asked when the City will start building using material that can be reused to fit the environment, like tiny houses.

Daniel Arnold spoke on his support of Nation Outside.

DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

DISCUSSION – RED TAGS AND DISPLACEMENT; Economic Development & Planning/Code Enforcement, LPD, HRCS/Housing Ombudsman

Economic Development & Planning/Code Enforcement

Councilmember Hussain mentioned dealing with red tags and the urgency when there was a fire where someone was living, indicating he wanted to start with the ED&P Dept on the questions for follow up from the last meeting asking if the database has begun to share with courts and LPD. Ms. Kimmel said yes, they have one that can be shared just need to figure out who needs it and how to get them the access whether it is in excel or an actual handout provided. Councilmember Wood said her concern is that when dispatch sends an officer that person needs to be able to access and look at real time. Captain Diehl mentioned the data currently isn't easily accessible to the officer and they cannot pull it up in the cars, and it is mostly after hours that are more difficult. Continuing that dispatch doesn't have the access so they LPD is asking for something they can look back to and review quickly and up to date. Ms. Kimmel confirmed they can get it anyway they request if they want dispatch to have access to BS&A or an excel sheet. Captain Diehl mentioned she would have to check as it is not her call to decide. Councilmember Hussain asked if the committee could get an update in a couple weeks. Councilmember Wood asked for a back up plan if this doesn't work, Captain Diehl confirmed she would work with Ms. Kimmel on that.

Councilmember Hussain next asked about the recommendation from committee on reducing the 90 days to 60 days in the NEAT Program. Ms. Kimmel stated they've had some conversations on this and the dept has a new interim code manager who is in training right now. Continuing that they are looking at that on their policy and procedures. Councilmember Hussain asked about the fee study? Ms. Kimmel confirmed that as well. Councilmember Wood asked even if it is being reviewed, please confirm you gave the recommendation, Ms. Kimmel confirmed and said fee study will include presentation to council. Councilmember Wood mentioned the red tags and that they shouldn't be occupied, Ms. Kimmel stated if they find them occupied, they are reporting it to LPD. Councilmember Wood stated she always states that part of the Make Safe or Demolish (MSD) the three requirements, timeline, permits, and showing funds to accomplish, and encourages the same policy to be incorporated to NEAT so you know they are serious and have expectations, Ms. Kimmel agreed. Councilmember Kost asked for the number of tags now, Ms. Kimmel responded 706. Councilmember Kost then stated he noticed there is more information on BS&A and asked if there is any follow-up on the social media news. Ms. Kimmel indicated that they've discussed this and the workers are checking as they have time but no staff completely devoted. Councilmember Wood asked if the fee study was expected to be completed before budget, Ms. Kimmel answered not but will be completed and recommended and will provide Council with a presentation by end of July.

HRCS

Councilmember Hussain then asked Mr. McDonald on the process of placement of red tag and coordination with his office and/or position, is there a site visit, a mailer, hotel information, what. Mr. McDonald currently said all code officers have his contact info and when they tag a house, they will alert him. Adding there are three flyers that code has and will hand out if person is in the home and looks like half of the 15 are owner occupied. Mr. McDonald said they have a plan with Barb on the 15 that includes visit with LPD Social Worker and himself and asking how their situation came about and options for where they can go and connect them with resources. Councilmember Hussain asked who's handing the information out and Ms. Kimmel confirmed Code Officer and LPD Social Workers have them as well.

Councilmember Wood asked if half of the 15 are owner occupied are the slumlords turning them over on land contracts so issues don't have to be taken care of and have "tenants" paying then they get evicted. Mr. McDonald said he looked at BS&A for tax record, Councilmember Wood if he scrolled to the bottom to verify it was ZERO. Mr. Smiertka addressed the misconception with land contract and in law there are two titles (legal and equitable), when equitable goes to rental owner still retains

ownership. Councilmember Wood stated there are still people living in them and they don't know why it's red tagged whether it's not registered, faulty furnace, or electrical issue. Mr. McDonald said the other part is going there with Code so they have an idea of what they are dealing with, that will inform them of the resources they need. Councilmember Wood asked Mr. McDonald when he goes to the home who is he verifying the issues with, he responded Code and LPD. Councilmember Wood then asked for when, before he goes to the house, 2 days after. He answered they haven't gotten that far yet, initially they go to the house and see the condition and figure out a course of action and what they are eligible for.

Councilmember Hussain said he would like to have Mr. McDonald return to a future meeting to see how things are progressing. Ms. Kimmel added they are working to find a process and reporting to LPD, then OCA, adding if it is owner occupied they can't enter without a warrant. Mr. Smiertka added there are procedures if a warrant is needed to request from courts and OCA can help with that.

Councilmember Kost asked Mr. McDonald to confirm they haven't started yet though, Mr. McDonald confirmed. Councilmember Kost commented he is happy to see social worker is going and helping. Ms. Martin added limited resources are correct, but happy to assist when can, but some shelters are full and there are wait lists. Councilmember Wood asked if Mr. McDonald has sat with the Landlord Association, he confirmed, she then asked if any discussion on emergency housing for the short term for example you have 30 landlords, 3 open properties, can you call and asked then they check and offer options. Mr. McDonald said he likes the idea and maybe get with landlords for rapid housing. Councilmember Wood indicated some don't or aren't eager for short term but have them understand after 60 days it may get extended and it would be cheaper than a hotel. Councilmember Kost asked for a timeframe to hear back, Councilmember Hussain then asked Mr. McDonald to return for the next meeting on April 4th for an update, Mr. McDonald confirmed. Councilmember Kost asked Director Coleman how much funding in the hotel bank, she responded \$125,000 they are running about \$50,000 a month so yes they will run out soon. Councilmember Kost asked how many people out of the shelter, she responded 96 children and 61 adults.

Councilmember Hussain asked Ms. Martin what she is seeing out there, she responded since COVID funds ran out the rise is expeditious, and limited resources. Part of the problem is lack of affordability for those that don't qualify for Section 8 or because of price range. Councilmember Hussain thanked everyone for their hard work as everyone continues to move forward and tackle the issues.

Management Properties

Councilmember Hussain shared a spreadsheet with committee on different companies that own a number of properties, one being Brad Simtob. A while back there was a team that would meet and get together every two weeks and review and go over issues. Going forward this is going to be part of our public safety meeting going forward. Councilmember Wood concurred that they would meet twice a month with Code, LPD, Fire, OCA and four community members, each tasked with something different like inspections, reports for property, motel inspections for fire, etc. Now you repeatedly hear landlords say they are "working on repairs" and they aren't. Mr. Smiertka acknowledged these are all LLC owned, in the worst cases we can go to court for public nuisance, we just need have all the facts. Councilmember Wood confirmed first thing needed is LPD reports on the properties and then any outstanding code issues/permit status, also Renee check on taxes through treasury on what is owed and have this information to review before coming back to meet, Councilmember Hussain confirmed information on April 4th and meet April 21st.

Councilmember Kost asked in short, they are going after the landlords for 90 day misdemeanor knowingly renting red tag. Mr. Smiertka confirmed but again reminded must have the report. Captain Diehl mentioned looking at one address it has 32 units and right now LPD doesn't have a dedicated officer for this project to get through in two weeks. Councilmember Wood asked if they would prioritize Holmes Apartments at 2222 W Holmes Rd, and Ms. Martin also mentions 911 W Cavanaugh Rd.

Councilmember Kost asked Mr. Smiertka to confirm that once a report is made through LPD then law can go after the landlord, Mr. Smiertka confirmed as long as the facts are in the report.

DISCUSSION – Fair Chance Housing Ordinance

Councilmember Hussain stated this was brought to Ad Hoc last year and he's asked Mr. Smiertka to discuss the opinion. Continuing that landlords don't even complete a credit check once they find out have a criminal history. Mr. Smiertka stated was a test ordinance in ad hoc and it did not run through their ordinance review committee, and asked Ms. Hagen-Lawrence to write an opinion. He continued the committee has draft 2, there are issues and processes that aren't right, there have been questions with other city's with similar ordinances but they may enforce differently than Lansing. Ms. Hagen-Lawrence mentioned first she speaks through OCA, first intent of ordinance is for individuals with criminal history to be able to show, and this is not allowing to happen until all done. Ms. Hagen-Lawrence reference page 9, it speaks to ability of housing provider determines what is appropriate for adverse action for types of convictions. She did ask to point out that others have framework but not identical. Councilmember Wood asked Ms. Hagen-Lawrence if something was statewide how does she see that, she responded anything state limits their authority but is more expansive. Councilmember Kost said he heard months ago that some movement on housing in the legislature, might be something to dig into, possibly a resolution in support of. Councilmember Hussain agreed and asked Councilmember Wood if she would mind if he would reach out and check, she agreed and can get an update on April 4th if possible.

OTHER

Councilmember Hussain inquired to Mr. Smiertka about the illegal gambling investigation, he responded that they went out to it and was at the wrong suite, but that LPD is on it. Continuing that two separate actions for violating the gaming ordinance and the taking of the machines is needed.

ADJOURN

Adjourned at 4:46pm

Submitted by

Renee Richmond, Recording Secretary

Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on April 4, 2023