



**MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY TASK FORCE
MINUTES
December 20, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Esther Patt
Kathy Wallig
Theresa Michelson
Norma Linton
John Roska
Marianne Downey
Chris Stohr
James Moreland
Libby Tyler
Chief Connolly
Laurel Prussing

OTHERS PRESENT: Joel Sanders, Mike Monson, Phil Edwards, Michelle Brooks, Chief Nightlinger, Diane Marlin, Robin Arbiter, Richard Balsbaugh

I. Call to Order

Mayor Prussing called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

II. Public Input

Robin Arbiter addressed the Task Force regarding safety concerns at Aspen Court/Lierman Neighborhood. She also addressed crime concerns and lack of affordable housing.

Diane Marlin addressed the Task Force to thank staff for scheduling a meeting with apartment owners and managers in response to recent violence. Ms. Marlin also addressed the crime statistics that were provided with the packet for this meeting and have previously been provided to the City Council. She stated that even though it appears there is a decrease in crime based on numbers reported to the Illinois State Police that may not be the case for Urbana. Some codes have been changed in recent years that skew the way that crimes are being reported to the Illinois State Police. She cautioned being accurate about statistics being reported to the public.

Richard Balsbaugh addressed the Task Force regarding adding additional law enforcement and neighborhood violence. He indicated that he is in support of adding additional police officers as he is very concerned about crime in Ward 7. He also stated that landlords need to be held responsible for their properties and should put in security cameras.

III. History of Mayor's Neighborhood Safety Task Force

Mayor Prussing reviewed the history of the Neighborhood Safety Task Force that was formed in 2005. She stated that there have been some ordinances passed in cooperation with the Task Force such as Rental Registration and Aggravated Public Nuisance.

She also stated that changes have been made to building inspections, nuisance abatement and liquor licenses. In addition there is a group called Problem Properties that meets weekly to discuss ongoing issues.

IV. Review of Effective Ordinances

The Mayor reported that the packets contained information about what the various departments are doing to enforce the ordinances and work on reducing crime.

Theresa Michelson asked about the Aspen Court property and what is going on with it.

Libby Tyler responded that this property is probably the number one concern and the property is for sale and would be redeveloped into viable affordable housing. The group interested in purchasing is TWG Development and they hope to begin redevelopment in 2017.

Norma Linton asked about hoarding and how it is addressed.

Libby Tyler responded that neighbors can contact the city anonymously if they identify an issue. There are instances where the Fire Department identifies an issue after responding to a call. She stated that the City coordinates with other agencies to deal with any health issues.

Esther Patt asked about people being displaced by the renovation of Aspen Court.

Ms. Tyler responded that the renovations will be done in phases. Some renters may be moved to other units while their unit is being remodeled.

Chris Stohr asked how often units are inspected under rental registration.

Ms. Tyler responded that there are 9600 rental units in the City and they are systematically inspected by zone. Inspections can occur earlier if there are complaints from tenants or neighbors.

James Moreland asked if there would be neighborhood input on the TWG project.

Mr. Tyler reported that TWG will engage with the neighbors.

Kathy Wallig asked about multi units not being required to have surveillance cameras.

Ms. Tyler reported that surveillance can be required under the aggravated nuisance ordinance.

Lt. Sanders addressed this question by stating that there could be some constitutional issues raised by requiring that surveillance cameras be installed and made available to the police for a property that has not had any previous problems. He stated the department would rather work with property owners and get voluntary compliance.

James Moreland asked who would be responsible for maintaining the cameras.

Lt. Sanders responded that the property owner would be responsible for installing and maintaining the cameras, which is one reason the City wouldn't want to start requiring everyone to have them and then there would be a question of who is going to pay for it.

Michelle Brooks, Assistant City Attorney addressed the Task Force regarding problem landlords and passing the Aggravated Public Nuisance Ordinance that has helped in taking cases to court for non-complaint landlords. She shared that there was recently a case where the Court ordered a landlord to pay a very large judgement to the City.

V. New Challenge of Gun Violence

Mayor Prussing stated that there are new gang problems which is why she is requesting the Council to approve five (5) more police officers.

VI. Comments from Task Force Members

Mayor Prussing went around the table and asked for input from each neighborhood group on what their concerns were.

Chris Stohr reported that HUENA has been meeting on occasion to discuss gun violence after a shooting occurred right around Halloween in their neighborhood. They have been working on what type of response they would like to see to prevent this situation from happening in the future.

Marianne Downey added that HUENA would like to know what the game plan would be if five additional officers were added.

James Moreland stated that the LNAC Neighborhood is concerned with there not being enough police on patrol. He indicated that the criminals have figure out the routines and when the police most likely won't be patrolling.

Kathy Wallig stated that SUNA would like to commend the Police Department for stepping up patrols when the violence started breaking out at Silver/Vawter. Her concern is that when the police are consistently responding to high crime areas they are taken away from other areas of the City. The police department has consistently been understaffed and it is hard to maintain good police officers when they are dealing with being understaffed and it contributes to their overall stress.

Norma Linton reported that people in her neighborhood seemed to be most concerned about the condition of the surrounding houses, trash, yard debris and hoarding. A number of the houses in the neighborhood have been converted from owner occupied to rentals which makes it difficult to keep the neighbors involved in keeping the neighborhood in good condition.

Esther Patt stated that since the time when she was on the City Council there have consistently been rumors about low numbers of officers on patrol at night. She thinks it would be helpful to have a clear understanding on current staffing levels on each shift.

Mayor Prussing reported that staffing levels will be discussed along with the discussion of adding more officers.

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VII. Next Meeting Date

Tuesday, January 17, 2017 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Reports from Task Force on Discussions with Their Neighbors.

VIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jolinda Ross
Recording Secretary

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