

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, March 16, 2015
6:45 p.m.
Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Marie Carrubba, Councilman Brent Sheldon

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilwoman Maria Jones

OTHERS PRESENT: Council President Greg Rabb, Director of Development Vince DeJoy, Todd Peterson, Councilman Tony Dolce, Councilwoman Kim Ecklund

Chairwoman Carrubba called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the March, 2015 meeting were approved.

Remarks from Community Members/Committee Members

No one appeared to speak.

MyGov Program Update

Mr. DeJoy: We're here tonight to give an update and not a full presentation of the MyGov system. As you know it was in August of last year that we actually signed the contracts for MyGov and spent a couple of months building the systems. Todd and I spent a lot of time coming up with basically decision trees and that's how this whole system works. From the moment a complaint is registered in by phone call, email or in person how it starts and the whole process and what happens each step of the way and that's basically how this platform is predicated on a decision tree type of model. We actually became operational with the system during the first week in November and we started transitioning over from our previous system, IPS, to this MyGov system. Initially it took a lot of; it wasn't easy right off the bat because it's a completely new platform for the Code Enforcement Officers and for our office and we were kind of going back and forth between two different platforms for some of the historical data and its ongoing cases. At the time when we became operational in the first week of November we didn't have any of the legacy data that was imported. So we spent a couple of months, the month of November and December and January, using this platform to start registering code enforcement complaints. As you can imagine, that time of year isn't the busiest time of year for new complaints. Mostly it's a lot of following up on previous complaints, different types of complaints such as heating issues.

Mr. Peterson: Frozen water issues. A lot of our complaints quite frankly are coming in from tenants more than they would be from homeowners. About 8 to 1 so we hear from a lot of tenants who are in severe straits sometimes with no heat, we've told the landlord it needs to be repaired, he won't respond, so we have to then find a way and we use various methods to get ahold of the landlords to get them motivated to get these things done.

Mr. DeJoy: So a complaint comes in to our office and Beth Kresge is the person to initiate it and put it in the system, decides what type of complaint it is and what happens is from there the Code Enforcement Officer receives an email or it appears on their dashboard; I shouldn't say or, both ways. What the Code Enforcement Officer will do is take one of these tablets, take it out in the field and basically go through their 19 point inspection and when they have an issue, they basically can use this to take pictures of it and it will be attached to the system. Todd has brought in a couple of cases tonight to kind of demonstrate how the process works, where it is in the process. We did have our legacy data imported. I think it was somewhere around the middle February because what they basically had to do was take the database of all these tables and parson and try to filter them and figure out what was going on and then determine how they would fit into the fields that make up this database.

Mr. Sheldon: Do you put in closed cases as well as active cases?

Mr. DeJoy: All of those cases are now available to our Code Enforcement Officers. Todd do you want to go through some specific cases at this point?

Mr. Peterson: I can. We can just talk about the general, the request tracker obviously that's where we find where that initial complaint comes from. So when we come in and we see an active request or a pending request on our list, which you can see here.

Ms. Carrubba: Do you hit active request?

Mr. Peterson: That lists all the requests that the specific inspector has seen. This is my dashboard for example is for me. Other inspectors have their own. This is just mine. I have 47 active requests, I have 8 pending; in other words, I haven't been there yet. So I have to go there and when I hit that pending request list it will give me a list of all the properties that we have pending. These are complaints essentially that come in. At that point, we have to begin that process of going out and looking at them. I generally don't change the status from pending to active until I've had an opportunity to look at the building and make the determinations as to exactly what needs to be done. The reason for that is that you'll have some complaints that come in that frankly don't have anywhere to go and at that point you can basically shut them down. They're not eliminated from the system, they still appear, but they're showing basically as closed. They archive them at that point. We'll go to a property, take this obviously right out there with us, right into the house, ask a lot of general questions once we're able to get inside or outside, either way. We begin photographing various aspects of the property and seeing what's wrong. At that point, using the lists that we built; let me talk a little bit about that, the correction list are corrections that are pre-written that are in this list and in various groups in

the decision tree that you talked about. What we have to do is determine which group is appropriate, find the specific type of violation that is in there and then that is brought in, we have to go to those lists and actually list corrections that have to be done. We can also take the pictures that we've taken of the property, we can actually insert them into the notice itself via the ticket or notice of violation and they come in, basically on a thumbnail on the actual notice. We will basically copy those and make them larger so obviously the recipient can see them and get a better idea. The pictures have been incredibly helpful because they can't deny that something's wrong if there's a photograph you've sent them that they can look at and say yes I guess I have a problem. I have cases here which I'm going to pass around and because you're using a decision tree concept, any of you that have ever seen our old notices of violation, they were all on one sheet. That was basically about it, we listed everything. These, because of the way things are set up and things are categorized, you have to do a notice for each grouping. So you have an exterior maintenance, interior maintenance, nuisance which would be junk debris, garbage, grass, mechanical issues in the house involving plumbing, electrical, heating, things of that nature and you have to go through those steps and build your notices. On simple things we can build them right out in the car it's very simple, you can do one in a few minutes. You get something a little more complicated, a little more long-winded, you're going to have to go back and sit down and basically try to do it that way to get everything in there.

These are just, they're grouped together with a paper clip if you want to look through them. These are basically the finished product that we produce and the pictures are in there and it basically covers all of the things that I found at that house and the wording that you see in regards to the correction, that's pre-written. I've already pre-written that when we were initially setting this up. I took the entire code and went through one by one and sat there for I don't even know how many hours it was to build that correction list, but they do give you an option, you can add a custom item if you have something that's within that category, but very specific that needs to be done, they give you that freedom to put that one thing in there. I'll pass these around in the folder and you can take a look. A lot of the wording is the same as our old notices, there are some changes, but at least it will give you an idea of how we put these things together.

Mr. DeJoy: This isn't, by far, the comprehensive type of presentation that we want to do. If you want to give us another month or so to really get everything in order and then we'll do a comprehensive presentation properly in this room and go through some of the cases. We just wanted to kind of show you what we were doing, give you a little update. Do you want to take a specific case or two?

Mr. Peterson: Yes. I can borrow one of these if I may.

Mr. DeJoy: What's the address Todd?

Mr. Peterson: The address is 16 Peach Street. This is actually a very lengthy one.

Ms. Carrubba: If I put the address in here, active cases, would that do it? I'm looking at one sheet and I see 15 Bassett interior it looks like what you would be looking at.

Mr. DeJoy: I'm going to do how I would do it. This LM there means location manager. If you called me up and said what's going on at this property, 16 Peach, hit apply filter, it comes up.

Mr. Peterson: That's basically how they appear as active cases.

Mr. DeJoy: As his active cases on his dashboard, but I wouldn't typically be looking at that. If someone called me up. If Sam called me up and asked what was going on, I'd go to this location records detail and it kind of gives you some of the history, some of the past ones from back in all the archived ones from our legacy data and it looks like there's a current one started on the third.

Ms. Ecklund: Why is it on there three times?

Mr. DeJoy: Let's just say if there's a junk and debris or there's another issue that's a separate.

Ms. Ecklund: There's a different code or type that it goes to. I guess they all have different types.

Mr. DeJoy: Yes as you can see it goes 7-8 7-9. 8-0 is the case number so it must be three different issues going on.

Mr. Peterson: Yes in this particular house there are four. Maintenance issues and again we've got damaged electrical outlets, wall switches, that's all part of it. It then moves to interior maintenance. I've got damaged floors, walls, ceilings.

Mr. DeJoy: So let's go to the interior maintenance, IM.

Ms. Carrubba: Do you hit the active part of it or do you just hit the in maintenance that interior, will that come up?

Mr. DeJoy: You can just hit the active part and you'll see another screen come up. That's basically the decision screen.

Ms. Carrubba: Okay I see it. It says gutters hanging...

Mr. DeJoy: As you can see each step is outlined and he goes through and depending on where they are in the process, your initial inspection, mail your notice letter, his next inspection on this property we know is April 3rd.

Mr. Peterson: Essentially it takes you through steps. Start here, check the property history and check if it's vacant, what the SBL number is. Then you move into the initial

inspection and when you move into initial inspection, that's really when it starts going. Say we found the violation, we hit submit on that, that will give me the correction items for this particular property.

Mr. DeJoy: Which step are you on Todd?

Mr. Peterson: I moved on to set direction items. That actually lists the corrections that are again, are pre-written.

Mr. DeJoy: Is that the mail the notice letter?

Mr. Peterson: Yes when you start a set result then you hit submit. You skip the inspection date, I don't worry about that, I take it off. Then it goes into the correction list. If you see there's a camera here basically we take these in the field, we email them to ourselves and put it in the folder and a lot of cases again, it covers almost every conceivable interior problem that we come across.

Mr. Dolce: Are these available for viewing online?

Mr. DeJoy: Not yet.

Mr. Dolce: But they will be?

Mr. DeJoy: Depending on what the...

Mr. Dolce: The question I'm asking is how much confidentiality is there?

Mr. DeJoy: There is definitely some confidentiality that will - that's the part we're still trying to work out.

Mr. Dolce: In other words if there's an eyesore in the neighborhood and the neighbors know it's on there, can they look in and see?

Ms. Ecklund: Can they just see that there's an open claim?

Mr. DeJoy: They can.

Ms. Ecklund: Without seeing particulars.

Mr. Peterson: Yes they're not going to see for example case notes or things like that. The majority of where we are in the process, correction dates, things like that.

Ms. Ecklund: That's what I think would help, if they could just see general, instead of always calling your office or calling us to call your office to find out where you are on a house.

Mr. Peterson: Right. This way they can go and actually see where we are with that property.

Ms. Ecklund: And obviously if they have a specific question they can still call, but I think it will alleviate some of those calls.

Mr. Dolce: It's time consuming because they'll call us.

Ms. Ecklund: And then we call.

Mr. Dolce: And then we have to call you. And then you have to call us back and then we have to call them.

Ms. Carrubba: I know there's always To getting this up and running and using it and ease of use and all of that. It looks very nice compared to what it's been and I know having had to file some complaints on behalf of some residents. How are you finding it? Is it really assisting you in being more efficient because I know it took a long time to get everything uploaded?

Mr. Peterson: It is a work in progress and it will be a work in process for a while because it's like anybody that's ever started with new software, you're starting cold from scratch and learning, we learn new things about it literally every day. And the other good thing about this is that they have a wonderful support network and on our main dashboard there is what looks like a little tablet next to the word logout and if you hit that, that actually is an email directly to their tech department. No question is dumb as far as I'm concerned because if you don't know, you don't know. I will type something into the tech department, it takes about 15 minutes and they write back. We went back and forth several times in the process talking back and forth about how to resolve things. And now that we've learned we can resolve a lot of the stuff ourselves without having to go to them. So that's the really good part, we can figure things out on our own, that's been a plus so far.

Mr. DeJoy: What I will say is, what I intend to do is, give you guys the same access that we have, that we can look at so that you can answer those specific questions when you get the phone calls. Just like when Tony called me the other night, I was sitting up watching TV and I had this thing right there next to me and was able to look it up and I knew exactly what it was. It took me a couple of minutes and I figured out what was going on.

Mr. Peterson: We all communicated quickly. I got there the next morning so we could take a look at it and we're starting to build one that as a case now. We'll probably get that case resolved fairly quickly.

Mr. DeJoy: Let's see a demolition one.

Mr. Peterson: That will be in location manager.

Mr. DeJoy: Go to LM on top.

Mr. Peterson: Let's go to 12 West Sixteenth. So we type that in and we hit the words apply filters and that will bring up the property. At the very end of that you see a little flag with a symbol right in between and that basically is where we go to look at all the information available on that house.

Mr. DeJoy: Everything from contracts, asbestos surveys, invoices for that. Everything that's associated with that case is right here.

Mr. Peterson: We've got everything available so if somebody from the State says I need to see this now, it's right there and we can just hit it and bang it shows up and we can print it out. We can't print from the tablet, but we can at least come back and print it from the computer.

Mr. Dolce: So you can't print from this?

Mr. Peterson: You can, but you get to a certain part, for example if I want to issue a notice of violation and we call that a notification letter, I don't print it, I stop at that point when I have all the data in and Beth downstairs can actually go into this, see that there are letters ready to be printed.

Mr. DeJoy: She actually gets notified.

Mr. Peterson: Yes she can print it right from there if they're in the envelope we just have to sign it and send it out.

Mr. DeJoy: If he hits, is it mass print?

Mr. Peterson: Yes we can do it either way.

Mr. DeJoy: So Todd doesn't even have to be in the office. She gets a notification that this needs to be printed and it's all ready by the time he comes back. It even is all signed for him. Basically what I wanted to show you is there's some of the case file on it and there's the permit to actually do the demo and everything from asbestos survey to bids to all the contracts, to invoices, anything associated with the case is basically available at your fingertips.

Mr. Rabb: It's fascinating about the owners, Cleveland and Middletown. What would they want with a house on Sixteenth Street?

Mr. Peterson: He's owned that house for 30 years and he's very elderly now and he simply was in too poor of health to continue.

Ms. Ecklund: I'm assuming he lived here at one point in time, or no?

Mr. Peterson: I'm not sure if he ever did, but we contacted his family and talked to him and he had no problem. He signed off on it and assumed the cost too.

Ms. Carrubba: Thank you. That was very helpful to see that and we look forward to the full presentation at some point.

Mr. DeJoy: It's working very well.

Ms. Carrubba: No it looks very good. I'm impressed with just what I've seen now.

Mr. DeJoy: We have it all at our fingertips and I can tell at any given time what's going on in the process.

Ms. Carrubba: It's much better. It's much more effective. It'll be great once you get this all on there and get everything worked out and people onboard with figuring out - it'll be great. It'll be much better than the system you have now. Thank you for that.

Demolition Program Update

Mr. DeJoy: What you see here is a spreadsheet that we're using to track this current group of 25, actually it's probably more than 25 now, that we've been working on. Some of them as you can see the project costs are all put in, that usually means that's where it is in the stage. If you have any specific questions on specific properties, Todd basically has been the project manager on all of this demolition activity.

Mr. Peterson: If you see project end date those are projects that in fact are done, completely done. The others are obviously in various stages of abatement, air monitoring, when we get through that step, we've actually put protocol together, that checklist that goes with this, that follows each individual property, so we can't essentially get messed up on it at all because you have to follow the steps all the way through it.

Ms. Carrubba: What's going on with the house that burned on Tenth Street and then there's another house behind that. I think it's 5 and 9.

Mr. DeJoy: They're going to be on a private, they're not ones that we're actually project managing.

Ms. Carrubba: Okay.

Mr. DeJoy: Until it comes to the point where nothing happens, then we have to step in.

Ms. Carrubba: Well there's debris there and I didn't know if the house, the second house that caught fire, is that going to be re-occupied? Do you have any idea with that one? There have been some boarded windows, but there's no sign on it not to be occupied or anything else. I just wondered what the circumstances were.

Mr. Peterson: We haven't received the report from the fire department at this point because it was a private issue. We can certainly post it, that's not a problem.

Ms. Carrubba: I have no idea, I guess I get more concerned as the weather gets better and kids on the street, it's in such close proximity to my office that I thought to see kids monkeying around in it.

Mr. DeJoy: So is the debris pile still there? I haven't been down there to look at it.

Ms. Carrubba: Oh yes, it's all still there. Everything's still there.

Mr. Peterson: It's still there so we'll have to go through and find out where they are in the process.

Ms. Carrubba: There's been nothing removed.

Mr. Peterson: We've taken down, actually through this, a number of fire damaged properties or they're in the works, 236 Falconer Street was one that I had removed. I have another one at 420 Falconer Street, they're doing the abatement on that now, that one will be coming down shortly. It's moving along, like I said, in various stages.

Mr. DeJoy: As you can imagine, something like this happens with a fire, we don't immediately go in - we just don't have the funds - we give the owner every chance to do it and then when they don't perform, that's when we begin the legal process.

Ms. Carrubba: I understand that.

Mr. Sheldon: 236 Falconer Street that was a fire last winter that got demolished in December.

Mr. Peterson: We fought with the owner for a while, he was trying to get the money together, couldn't get the money together, went through a long, lengthy miserable process you have to go through and finally it disappeared. I'm very happy.

Ms. Carrubba: I appreciate you keeping us up to date on this because from time to time in the winter we don't seem to get as many complaints about some of the properties as much as they do in the summer when everybody's out and now it's become more of an issue because they're looking at it constantly. We appreciate everything that you're doing and I know we've

got more need than we have funds for so it's always a question of prioritizing all of it. We thank you for the update. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Mr. DeJoy: No, but if you have any specific questions on any others while we're here, we've got Todd here.

Mr. Sheldon: There are a couple of homes here, are they possibly going to be rehabbed at this point?

Mr. Peterson: No, we have an ownership at 225 Allen Street. Another owner jumped into the middle of all of this and purchased the building so we have some court things that have to be settled. 130 Weeks Street that will be probably resolved shortly. So the on-hold status will change to an active status at some point and we can take that down.

Mr. DeJoy: I can tell you one of the issues is that the person that owned it is deceased with no relatives, there's a bank mortgage on it, we're giving them every opportunity to step in and do something with it and they haven't. Unfortunately, just to let you know, the bid came back for the asbestos abatement and this one we can't use CDBG money on because of where it is it's \$33,000.00 just for the asbestos abatement. That was the low bid of the three.

Mr. Peterson: Because it's very hot. It's loaded with...

Mr. DeJoy: That's one that we're going to proceed with and do it and bite the bullet to get rid of it.

Mr. Peterson: Our biggest abatement is \$44,000.00 at 11 Crossman.

Mr. DeJoy: And we're not done with that one yet.

Mr. Peterson: We're not done with that one yet either, we've got more going on there.

Ms. Carrubba: That's a shame.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk