

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, August 10, 2015
6:45 p.m.
Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Marie Carrubba, Councilman Brent Sheldon, Councilwoman Maria Jones

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Vince DeJoy, Greg Rabb, Todd Isaacson

Chairwoman Carrubba called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the July 13, 2015 meeting were approved.

Remarks from Community Members/Committee Members

No one appeared to speak.

New Business

Mr. DeJoy: I just wanted to mention the structure fire that we had yesterday in the City on Newland Avenue, 623 Newland.

Ms. Jones: That was incredible.

Mr. DeJoy: It was incredible. I understand people from out on Chautauqua Lake saw the black smoke including one of our Code Enforcement Officers.

Ms. Carrubba: Vince, which block - was it between Forest going toward Main?

Ms. Jones: Next to Fresh Cut Meats and More.

Mr. DeJoy: It was the - you have the Fresh Cut Meats and More on the corner. There's a house and then it's the next house.

Ms. Carrubba: I can't believe it because I was just there earlier maybe Saturday morning I was there about 9:30 or 10:00.

Mr. DeJoy: Well this was Sunday.

Ms. Carrubba: I was there Sunday too.

Mr. DeJoy: Basically I got a call about 1:00 pm, a little bit before 1:00 from Battalion Chiefs on the scene asking me to come down. They couldn't get ahold of a Code Enforcement Officer, to come and assess the damage and I got there and called Ryan Patti, R. Patti, to do an emergency demolition. The roof was gone, the structure was gone. To Ryan Patti's credit, he was able to call some operators there and by 4:00 the house was down. The fire started at 11:30.

Ms. Carrubba: I was there that morning too. I must have been there just before because nothing had happened. I know Joe the owner and I go there all the time to buy my meat and I ran in to grab something quick and I was in and out and it had to have happened not long after I was in there. I didn't see a fire truck; I was parked on the side street going up Forest. Well it's a credit that they were able to – because I heard it on the radio today.

Ms. Jones: They got everybody out and nobody got hurt.

Mr. DeJoy: Nobody got hurt. The house on the left side, the siding is melted. Actually the lady that owns it, her husband passed away, it was in his name and I was able find a phone number and went to her house and showed her the pictures and we'll have to try and help her through the process, but quite frankly, this house; when I got there I looked it up and I didn't have the most current information, but I saw that Affinity One Credit Union was the owner, but it had since transferred title to one of our illustrious property investors; I'll put it that way. He has numerous properties of which we have in court already. There is another house that he had a house fire on Pearl Street. So I hope he has insurance.

Mr. Sheldon: One on Broadhead too, didn't he? I think in February.

Mr. DeJoy: Yes. I hope he has insurance and as matter of fact I filed a demo lien so if he does have insurance we will try and recover it right away.

Ms. Carrubba: How many people were displaced?

Mr. DeJoy: Well there are two families; some young kids and I'm not exactly sure who was in the downstairs apartment.

Ms. Carrubba: Any idea yet what caused the fire?

Mr. DeJoy: I don't know if the Fire Department has released anything.

Ms. Carrubba: It's a credit to all of them that nobody got hurt and that they were able to handle it so quickly because obviously it went very quickly for that structure to go.

Mr. DeJoy: It went extremely quickly.

Ms. Carrubba: It makes you think it may be electrical or something to go through that quickly.

Mr. DeJoy: No it wasn't electrical.

Ms. Carrubba: Okay.

Mr. DeJoy: Something unintentional, but actually someone had a hand in doing it.

Ms. Carrubba: I do actually have another question because somebody raised it. I don't know if it was in reference to the last drug raid that was on Weeks Street, the one that had the SWAT Team enter. Were there any violations in that property because from what I understood it's been a bit of an issue with a lot of people coming and going and different people living there and I'm not sure who the landlord is, but it was in Saturday morning's paper?

Mr. Sheldon: 23 Weeks? The same illustrious landlord if it was 23.

Mr. DeJoy: I don't know. This happened Saturday morning?

Ms. Carrubba: Actually the raid happened Friday morning, but it was in Saturday's paper and believe it or not, I'm not sure who videotaped the whole thing, but it was on the internet. They showed from the SWAT Team going in and the flash bang and the whole proceedings. I was quite surprised at who could get that close to film it. It was everything from the police exiting...

Ms. Jones: How did they know about it? To be there? That's what you want to know.

Ms. Carrubba: I don't know, but it filmed the whole episode unfolding. I was really surprised.

Ms. Jones: Unless somebody's tagged the Police Department and they take off when they take off.

Ms. Carrubba: Well this was the SWAT Team...

Ms. Jones: I know, but when the SWAT Team moves, maybe there's people just camped out waiting on the police to take off.

Ms. Carrubba: I don't know. I'd be interested to hear from the Chief how they go through that.

Ms. Jones: Sunday afternoon, that's going to be quite costly.

Ms. Carrubba: Luckily it didn't affect the business because that would be terrible.

Ms. Jones: I know, wouldn't that be awful?

Ms. Carrubba: They do a lot of business.

Ms. Jones: I know it.

Ms. Carrubba: The only other thing I'd like to add is that if you're not aware of who the owner of that property is, to mention it again that the Fair Housing training will be at 7:00 on Tuesday, August 18. It will be held at the JRC Building. It will be open to the public and there's no charge, but we're asking if anyone would like to attend, if they would just let us know so that they'll have enough materials brought down from the group Housing Opportunities Made Equal. Alyssa Bergsten will be the presenter. It should be very interesting. So if you know of anyone or you're interested if you can call my office or email me, we're just trying to get enough materials. We'll bring more, but it would be nice to know how many tables to set up and how many chairs.

Mr. Sheldon: Marie I have a question. Has there been any more discussion about the Chronic Nuisance Law? Another meeting with the Mayor?

Ms. Carrubba: We did meet and the result of that meeting is that due to current litigation that it's not judicious to proceed at this point in time. Right now we're not able to go any further with it at this point in time. We did meet. We met for two hours last week on Tuesday. We did meet. It was Vince, myself, Greg you were there, Marilyn, the Mayor, Matt Hanley.

Mr. Rabb: Lillian Ney was there, Peter Lombardi.

Ms. Carrubba: Pete Lombardi and Greg Lindquist and the Chief was there. That was the group, but it was just decided after some information was presented at the meeting that now would not be the time to proceed with it. It is not without acknowledgement that down the road we need to probably do more with enforcement of the actual code that we have right now, but there may be ways to deal with the same thing without actually changing the code.

Mr. Sheldon: I think there is a currently a law on the books state wide where if a house has recurrent drug sales, the owner of the house can be prosecuted. I had a call in to the DA's office today and he was out, but I hope to hear back from him tomorrow. I remember that law going into effect 20 years ago. I don't know that they're pursuing that at this point. Todd are you familiar with that law at all? Where landlords can be held liable for properties when they have recurrent drug sales.

Mr. Isaacson: Marilyn and the Mayor still working on litigation and what direction to travel.

Mr. Sheldon: I think that's a current state law if I'm not mistaken.

Mr. Isaacson: I don't know about that.

Mr. Sheldon: I called the DA's office so I can get more information. I just remember this law and why aren't we using it, especially in places when landlords have multiple properties where there have been drug raids.

Ms. Carrubba: Is there anything else for housing because we ran over a couple of minutes.

Mr. Rabb: I just wanted to have some clarification on the training at HOME because it's just an hour long training correct? I'm assuming that - I'm a member of HOME, a long-time member, but HOME primarily deals with fair housing and discrimination and the training as far as I know is on landlord-tenant rights with respect to non-discrimination and discrimination, not about a lot of other things that some landlords might want to bring up. It typically tells landlords this is what you can do, this is what you can ask about and it tells tenants that if you get asked these questions, you can make a complaint, for example, to HOME and HOME will investigate it separately or send it on to the Division of Human Rights, but I think the focus is going to be primarily on discrimination.

Ms. Carrubba: Well I think when I talked to her she said she would also bring materials per where our discussion is that there would be how to screen for good tenants on the part of the landlord, so some of what you're describing.

Mr. Rabb: Right, but then certain things that you can't ask.

Ms. Carrubba: Right there are things that you can't, but there will be educational materials for both landlords and tenants from tenants' rights to landlords' rights so it's going to be educational. That's the whole focus.

Mr. Rabb: Yes I just want to make sure that it's focusing on fair housing and discrimination because that's what HOME does.

Ms. Carrubba: Right but we did talk about the other issues; people with disabilities...

Mr. Rabb: Source of income....

Ms. Carrubba: This is not about....

Mr. Rabb: It's a whole slew of things...

Ms. Carrubba: No we're not talking about, if you're thinking landlord registrations and things like that.

Mr. Rabb: I'm not. I just want to make sure that it's clear to other people.

Ms. Carrubba: It is on fair housing, but it will be informational as to both perspectives of both parties in terms of renting from the perspective of the landlord and the tenant.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk