

# Minutes

Housing Committee  
Monday, October 20, 2014  
6:00 p.m.  
Police Training Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairwoman Marie Carrubba, Councilman Paul Whitford, Councilman Brent Sheldon

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilwoman Maria Jones, Rhonda Swanson

Chairwoman Carrubba called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the October 6, 2014 meeting were approved.

## **Remarks from Community Members/Committee Members**

Rhonda Swanson, 711 Lafayette Street: Recently I have had to learn about insect infestation in my neighborhood. The rumors had been flying for some months that there were several houses infested with not only cockroaches, but bed bugs and fleas. The house next to me has been condemned due to poor sanitation which is an understatement. When it was condemned, those people left. The upstairs apartment had already had been empty due to a drug bust earlier this year. I called the Department of Development they did say it was sanitary conditions. That was all they said. So a few weeks go by and the manager started coming to this property, I assumed, to clean it up. Every time they were in there, banging around, whatever they were doing, within twenty four to thirty-six hours I would find a little bug in my house. I thought I don't have bugs, I'd kill it and go on with my day. So then I found out by the rumor mill in the neighborhood that they were cockroaches. So I called the City again and they said yes, it was the third worst cockroach infestations that they've had in the City, right next door to me, within less than twenty feet. Then I found out that the manager of the property is going in and spraying. There apparently is no protocol in place. The City does not have any sort of protocol on how such a building should be handled. It's left up to the property owner or the manager. They were going in there and spraying and of course every time they sprayed, they killed several, maybe hundreds or thousands. There were hundreds moving out into the neighborhood. Dozens came into my house. I called pest control, Orkin, they very kindly came within twenty-four hours and put out bait because that's all they do. They said spraying just forces them into somebody else's residence. I said yes, that's how they came to be in my house. I called the Department of Development again, I think I spoke to Todd Peterson that time. He told me that spraying does work, a lot of people do it. I said that I thought it does kill a lot of them. Everything I found online, everyone else I've spoken to said to stop spraying because it

just disrupts the colony and you're making these creatures move into another house. I can testify to that. That's exactly what happened to me. I'm asking that the housing committee look into developing protocol. I got online, this is just a sample, this packet I'm going to hand you - it's just a sample of what I've found out. It's very interesting, in an icky way. Cockroaches aren't just icky, they carry diseases, they can trigger asthma attacks. They're a health concern for the public. I shouldn't be where I am. I shouldn't be burdening you tonight with this. I just don't understand how anyone who's reasonable would walk into a building where thousands of cockroaches are and just start spraying and hoping they got them all. Then, they unload all the bedding and the furniture and appliances into the trailer that sat in the driveway for a week before they took that away. They put the food waste and food wrappers and pop bottles that were scattered in every room of the house, I looked in the windows it was just disgusting, bagged that up and it sat on the front porch, again for several days, before that was taken away by the BPU who crushed the load in front of my house and I thought, they're popping those bags. There are live roaches in there, there are egg sacs definitely that are being scattered throughout the neighborhood, a neighborhood already under a lot of stress because of this infestation. So I called the BPU, I was very angrily told that their policy is not to pick up any bags or cans that have visible roaches on the outside of them. That is their policy, they have a policy to handle it in their garage. I said that I was asking them not to pick these bags up in front of a condemned house on a regular garbage day. I think it should be handled separately by a separate truck equipped to handle this and not spread the joy. Because these little devils are quick and they are survivors. I don't think anybody should have to join the club if they don't need to and I wish I weren't a member right now. I'm a good housekeeper and I'm sure I'll manage eventually. But, as long as that property next to me is managed the way it is, I'll never see the end of it. They are not required to call in a professional, they just do whatever they want to clean it up and rent it out to the next unsuspecting tenant.

Ms. Carrubba: Did you say there was a condemned sign on it now?

Ms. Swanson: Yes, but only the first floor apartment is condemned, so they can rent out the upper. The upper floor I was told was where the cockroaches originated, but because of the poor housekeeping on the first floor, of course they moved in and made themselves at home. I am not exaggerating. There were thousands and thousands lying on the floor. I've never seen anything like it, except on television and that was repulsive enough - to have it right next door. And they continue to spray and clean up any way they feel that they should. I really think that the City needs to develop a protocol. Nothing should leave that building. There should be baits put out, there should be vacuuming done, there's all sorts of things laid out. Penn State recommends things, Colorado State... You can go through anybody who's not selling something, you can pretty much depend on them to have done studies. There are a lot of good ideas on how to stop them from moving into someone else's residence. That's what I would like to see happen.

Ms. Carrubba: Does the County have a protocol do you know?

Ms. Swanson: That's an interesting thing, I'm glad you brought that up. The City Code refers to the County protocol. I called the County, there is no protocol.

Ms. Carrubba: I didn't know, this is a -

Ms. Swanson: The State doesn't have a protocol either. New York City does, California does, Arizona, Florida they do have protocols. I thought it might be interesting - I ran out of money and I couldn't print anymore or you would have had a lot bigger packet. There are some really awesome programs and they lay it out, how to deal with it. There are ways to control them to the point where they're not moving into next door. The most disturbing thing I think, was the diseases that they do carry. Of course food to them isn't something that you would consider food necessarily so they do spread disease, I won't go into that. I'm hoping that this body can put some thought into this and do some research because like I said there are people out there who have protocol and I think the City of Jamestown would be nice, with our very old housing, and with houses being so close together, it's really hard not to share our problems like this. Even though I've been at my house for twenty-eight years and never dealt with it before, I think it's the spraying that did it this time. It kind of scared the ones that survived over to me. In my opinion, the spraying should end.

Mr. Sheldon: Did Orkin recommend putting out boric acid or tenacious earth around your house?

Ms. Swanson: Yes, they said it does work and he said I should use all those things, but eliminating the food and the water is the single best way to curb it. That's what I did immediately. I have pets. They don't get their food anymore - I don't fill the bowl and walk away for the day. I stand there and when their done eating I put it away, seal it in a can. Everything has to be airtight sealed because those little devils, I don't know they must smell stuff, I don't know how they find food. I spend my days doing that. And water - all the water is picked up at night. I've never had leaky pipes go for more than forty-eight hours. I don't have any right now. The house next to me where these critters came from, there was standing water in the basement so I know that there's a problem there. And I'm sure that'll continue because they didn't educate themselves about this like I have. I've been learning, I've tried to share some of this with the manager and it didn't go well.

Ms. Carrubba: Who owns the building?

Ms. Swanson: Harold Jaffey who is an attorney in California.

Ms. Carrubba: He's the actual owner? Who's the manager.

Ms. Swanson: Harold Whitford. I did ask Harold to be reimbursed for the exterminator fees because this is not fair. I shouldn't have to do this. He hasn't responded. I'm pretty sure...

Mr. Whitford: Chances are he won't. Not Harold.

Ms. Swanson: They just want to make it appear as though it's ready to be moved into and I think the other part of this is the City should not remove that condemned sign until they put traps out, cockroach traps. They don't catch anything for thirty days because every two weeks these little things hatch out. So in thirty days you're going to have a nymph and if they don't get anything in their cockroach trap then they're good, but I bet you they will because they're not doing anything but spraying. That would be my other request that the Department of Development develops some protocol to handle this and that that sign doesn't come down until we know the neighborhood is free from harm.

Ms. Carrubba: I really appreciate Rhonda, I feel very badly and I'm sorry that you're going through what you're going through. I really do. It's a horrible situation to have to deal with when it's your home and you feel like you're doing everything you can, but the surrounding area is going to keep causing you problems until you can get rid of the problem where it's originating. I will certainly talk to people in the Department of Development and see what can be done if there is something. Do you want these papers back, these copies?

Ms. Swanson: No.

Ms. Jones: What street is this?

Ms. Carrubba: Lafayette Street. I concur that you're probably going to continue having the problem if they don't deal with the problem on that house.

Ms. Swanson: This is the sixth house in our neighborhood.

Ms. Carrubba: That's been infested already?

Ms. Swanson: Right, but the City's only been ... the City has not been in others so I'm sure the neighborhood is just - all the property owners and managers - they do the same thing. They empty it onto the terrace and their bags of garbage and they spray and it's obviously not working.

Ms. Carrubba: And these are all rental properties in that area?

Ms. Swanson: Yes.

Ms. Carrubba: Thank you Rhonda. I regret that we have to - there's a public safety meeting so we'll have to adjourn this meeting. If anything else arises, come back to the committee or give me a call. You've got my email. Just let me know.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson  
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk