

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, February 8, 2010
6:30 p.m.
Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Whitford, Steve Szwejbka

MEMBERS ABSENT: Michael Taylor

OTHERS PRESENT: Council President Rabb, Councilman Spitale, Director of Development Centi, Fire Battalion Chief Johnston, Tami Downey, Dave Painter, Councilman Dolce, Director of Financial Services/City Clerk Olson

Chairman Whitford called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the November 16, 2009 meeting were approved.

PUBLIC COMMENT/PERSONS TO ADDRESS THE COMMITTEE

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Whitford: we are still trying to locate a piece of property in the Prendergast Ave. area for the Neighbor Works Project.

NEW BUSINESS

LANDLORD REGISTRATION FORM

Mr. Whitford: I'm sure all of you had opportunity to look over the new draft for the Landlord Registration Form and I'd like to know if there are any questions on that. I think the committee did a wonderful job and in fact I kind of wrote up a thank-you thing for the committee. All I need is if there is no discussion a motion to move it forward to Public Safety.

Councilman Szwejbka moved to forward the registration form to the Public Safety Committee.

Carried.

I did write up the Housing Committee would approve this registration form and it will be forwarded to Public Safety for their approval. Hopefully, the language will be approved and moved forward and have final resolution by March voting session. The Housing Committee would like to thank Councilman Dolce for his hard work finalizing this form through the Housing Sub-Committee. The Landlord Registration Form is the end result of many months of hard work and direction from Councilman Dolce. We need to realize that this is a very important piece of legislation that will help resolve issues of public health, public safety and better address issues of Code violations in the City. Councilman Dolce involved all those who are affected by rental property issues. The Housing Committee would also like to thank all those who participated in the deliberations: the Police Department, the Fire Department, Department of Development – specifically Bob Weeks – City Treasurer's Office – Jim Olson, REIA representatives, Corporation Counsel, Judge Panebianco's input, tenants, the North Side Pride and most importantly concerned citizens. I believe this is an important step in moving forward in revitalization of our neighborhoods and to resolve problem areas with rental properties in a reasonable time frame. Again, I thank Councilman Dolce and all those who spent their free time working on this very important issue. Thank you very much.

There were a lot of emotions; there were a lot of different opinions during those deliberations and we weren't always in agreement. For the most part, everyone listened and was sensitive to the issues of the participants. So I really am proud of the outcome of this. I certainly believe in the near future, specifically this summer, that this will come into play. There were portions of problems with rental properties that I wasn't aware of, especially in the public safety sector where if there's a fugitive in a rental property and he is not the resident, they really have no legal right to do that without permission from – it will be permission from whoever's listed on there. So that will expedite some of those problems. I was glad that I had the opportunity to go to most of the...I think I may have missed one meeting...I think Tony did a terrific job and all of the participants really got engaged in work towards this end and I think it's a great result with a lot of hard work involved in it. If there's nothing else...

Mr. Rabb: I wasn't sure...are we going to move on to something else, or...I agree with everything you say and I think once this finally gets approved, which I can't imagine it won't by the whole Council, that this is another step forward in doing more about neighborhood revitalization and insuring that our community continues to improve. My one question – we talked about this earlier – was with respect to the Sub-Committee. I'm assuming that since their initial charge...it started out as Landlord Licensing which morphed into Landlord Registration

which I think wasn't a bad change. But I'm assuming at this point, given that the charge of the Sub-Committee has been fulfilled, that the Sub-Committee is not going to be meeting anymore?

Mr. Whitford: The only thing that I can really comment on that was is that Councilman Dolce was the Chair of the Sub-Committee and through their deliberations and this final result here that was considerable communications and exchange and conversation on tenant issues and how to educate the tenants and deal with the problems with tenants and their relationship with the landlords and the property managers and out of that it's my guess that Councilman Dolce felt that that was part and parcel to landlord registration with some form of education for tenants and how you address that – I don't know. I know that we could do it at the Housing meeting; I don't believe that we have to have a special meeting for that; we can schedule our Housing Committee meetings earlier and address that and see that if it's too involved and it involves another night, we can schedule that too. But, as far as the Sub-Committee, I would have to approach Councilman Dolce and ask him if he feels it's necessary to continue with that Sub-Committee, and I believe we can do it in the Housing Committee meetings.

Mr. Rabb: I think originally when this all started long ago when the majority of us joined the Council, that it started out as Landlord Licensing and then I think we decided, or you decided, or we all decided that that's why we needed the sub-committee – that it was going to take more time than we could here whereas I think some of these other issues...I would feel more comfortable if we started out discussing them here at the Housing Committee and then just like last time – I think you made the right decision to create a sub-committee to tackle the issue because it was more complicated and would take more time; but I think we need to bring the issues back to the Committee and then make a decision as to whether we need a new sub-committee to deal with more complicated issues like landlord registration.

Mr. Whitford: I know that Councilman Dolce has a meeting scheduled for this Wednesday so under work session, we can bring that up under Discussion and I think we could switch it to the Housing...you know, we can go forward with the one Wednesday just to see who's going to be involved and decide what we feel it's going to entail and who we need involved in it. Obviously, the tenants – we can't just have the Council and the landlords to address an issue. We have to take a look at the whole scope of the issue and then we can bring it back to the Housing and just have this the final meeting for the sub-committee.

Mr. Rabb: Okay. Thank you.

DEMOLITIONS

Mr. Szwejbka: I've got a question for Steve, maybe. Demolition of houses – North Side Pride was talking about them getting funding for it – demolition – are you familiar with that?

Mr. Centi: I'm not sure. Was there a specific structure that they were talking about?

Mr. Szwejbka: I don't know. Paul, are you aware of that?

Mr. Whitford: They haven't contacted me.

Mr. Szwejbka: I thought there was funding available. They were looking at getting three houses demolished...I read an article in the paper.

Mr. Centi: Three more – in addition to the three we already demolished?

Mr. Szwejbka: I thought that was what the...my question is – before we demolish them, is there any way we could possibly salvage anything from them? Saving the woodwork and trying to recoup some of the cost?

Mr. Centi: Generally, that's kind of factored in with the demolition contractor's bid if there's any salvage.

Mr. Szwejbka: The reason I am asking is that a contractor asked, I'd really like to have some of that hardwood in that building that was knocked down recently...

Mr. Centi: 62 Forest might have been an example – had really nice woodwork in it; but that's part of the salvage value that we offer to the demolition contractor if they elect to salvage anything out of the property – they could salvage value of what's in there.

Mr. Szwejbka: If they don't elect – what happens to all of that woodwork in there.

Mr. Johnston: You'd have to approach the demo guys and see if you could get in there.

Mr. Centi: Well, yes, before somebody gets in there.

Mr. Szwejbka: I'm just saying it's a thought maybe you could recoup some money because they're willing to pay for that hardwood – he said there are a lot of contractors who would love to get their hands on some of that hardwood that's being thrown away.

Mr. Centi: I could run that issue by the inspectors.

Mr. Spitale: In Buffalo, they have a place where they take everything apart. They did that during the Extreme Home Makeover. They had a place down the street and they saved some of the woodwork.

Mr. Szwejbka: People could save some money.

Mr. Spitale: My cousin built his house like that – he went around and got oak off of old houses.

Mr. Szwejbka: Right. Like I said, this contractor said there's a lot of people here that are willing to pay.

Mr. Spitale: Yes, beautiful stuff too – you can't duplicate it.

Mr. Centi: Let me check on that.

SKIPPY'S GRILL

Mr. Whitford: One other thing – is there a timeframe – I know we've come to an agreement with the County on Skippy's Grill – kind of a coordinated effort to remove that property and deal with that safety issue over there – is there a timetable set for that?

Mr. Centi: We're going out to bid on that soon.

Mr. Whitford: Okay.

Mr. Spitale: It blocks your vision when you're pulling out of Allen Street there.

Mr. Centi: I can check on the exact timeframe for you.

Mr. Spitale: A lot of memories there when it was nice.

czb NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION PLAN

Mr. Whitford: The last thing that I have is we're still waiting for the final recommendations from czb on the overall recommendations for revitalization. I know I was copied on some information....They haven't come out publicly with anything.

Mr. Rabb: We're still waiting on the final report.

Mr. Johnston: I've got one quick question if you don't mind going back to the form. Where will the data reside who's going to have it? How can you get a hold of that data at 2:00 in the morning?

Mr. Olson: It's something we're working on with Dan. It's probably going to be inputted through my office so Development, Fire Department, and Police Department will be able to have that information.

Mr. Johnston: Could we add it to the dispatch information?

Mr. Olson: Yes. That's what we're trying to work out with Dan, but we were waiting for the committee to bring it forward and Matt's going to put it on the website.

Councilman Dolce arrived.

Mr. Dolce: Were there any questions on the Registration Form?

Mr. Whitford: No. The only other thing we had under Discussion was the continuation of the sub-committee and my feelings were you felt that because there was a lot of discussion within the boundaries of this on tenant issues that that would be the next issue that we would

address and my recommendation was to go ahead and have the sub-committee meeting Wednesday and see what key players we need and how we're going to go forward with it, then do it in the Housing Committee meetings. Whether we have to have an extra meeting during the week to do that if it's that much time consuming...

Mr. Dolce: So you want to have the Housing Committee...

Mr. Whitford: ...address the tenant issue – yes.

Mr. Dolce: Ok, I guess we are done. I was going to try to call you today. I would like to have the sub-committee meet on the 17th I have a conflict this Wednesday.

Mr. Whitford: The 17th?

Mr. Dolce: Yes. Is that okay?

Mr. Olson: At 6 P.M.?

Mr. Dolce: have the minutes gone out?

Mr. Olson: No, I will try to have them done tomorrow.

Mr. Dolce: I will do the agenda after I have read them.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk