

Minutes

Housing Committee
Monday, April 7, 2008

6:00 p.m.

Police Training Room, 4th Floor
Municipal Building, Jamestown, New York

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Paul Whitford, Stephen Szwejbka, Michael Taylor

MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS PRESENT: Director of Financial Services/City Clerk James N. Olson,
Director of Development Steve Centi, Council President
Rabb, Tim Porter-Intern, Dave Painter, Pete Morgante,
Anthony Tota

Chairman Whitford called the meeting to order.

The minutes from the March 10, 2008 meeting were approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Whitford reviewed the March 13, 2008 meeting with Chautauqua County at the Jackson Center. There were 38 individuals present. The discussion dealt with what the Chautauqua County and City of Jamestown will be doing together as far as the foreclosure process, the auction process, costs of asbestos removal, and code inspections prior to the sale of the properties. Absentee landlords will be discouraged. Tax incentives were discussed to assist homeowners who want to improve their properties. The North Side Pride group made a presentation. They want home ownership above 50%. A resolution was suggested for the Year of the Neighborhood. Jamestown Savings Bank will assist with incentives for first-time homeowners. It was an excellent meeting. Chuck Cornell will be introducing legislation to initiate a revolving loan fund at the county in the amount of \$250,000. The City of Jamestown would work with the county on that.

NEW BUSINESS

Anthony Tota 48 Sherman Street expressed concern regarding properties surrounding him that he feels are out of code. WCA bought properties in the Prather Ave. and Arnold Street area going north and south and Sherman Street and Foote Ave. going east and west. The houses in question are in the 400 block of Prather Ave. opposite the ER driveway and Sherman Street. One has not been occupied for five years. It used to be owned by a Mr. Spano and was used as a Ronald McDonald House. It was later rented to a doctor. It has been deteriorating since then. Grass and bushes are not trimmed. General maintenance is not being done. He feels that because he has to maintain his own property, others should as well. His home is a two-family. He understands that there might be financial concerns for some but WCA has the resources to maintain the property. If they are not going to maintain the properties they should tear them down. One on Sherman Street has been vacant for two years. He indicated that there might be a potential rodent problem. He has contacted Bob Weeks at the Department of Development to express concern. He passed out photographs of the various properties. WCA should be contacted to see what their plans are for the properties.

Mr. Centi stated that he would follow-up on these properties and have Bob Weeks contact him. If they do not bring the property up to code, they will be taken to court.

Chairman Whitford stated he would be setting up a Ward 6 tour and have Bob Doverspike encourage homeowners to begin a program like he did on the north side. Possibly the Sherman Street area would be a good place to start.

Mr. Centi stated at the next meeting he would like to have the members review the CDBG Program. Council will approve the program at the June meeting. It has to be submitted by June 30th. There has been a 20% decrease in CDBG funds and a 22% decrease in HOME funds since 2001.

Councilman Szwejbka asked that the department review the status of a Curtis Street house near Clyde Ave. It appears that people are entering the property. The neighbor wants to purchase the property.

Mr. Centi said he would get the property secured and get back to him.

Pete Morgante, 134 Euclid Ave. asked if the concerns of the senior citizens would ever be discussed regarding the fear of losing their homes because they cannot pay their taxes. Taxes keep going up. The burden is on the property owners. At the Jackson Center meeting it was stated that the northside was targeted. That is a bad word. They were targeted on purpose. Many are for sale and they can't sell. The apartments were not changed. What will happen? The Strategic Planning Commission stated it was their goal to make us happy to pay taxes.

Chairman Whitford stated it is the city as a whole that is having problems.

Council President Rabb said that was never the goal of the Strategic Planning Commission nor was it discussed.

Mr. Morgante said you never came to the meetings. He stated he was at the Work Sessions and the Council meetings. The Strategic Planning Commission always wants to educate the people. Dr. Ney stated that.

Mr. Centi said he believed that the targeting of certain areas might be for assistance.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

James N. Olson
Director of Financial Services/City Clerk