

September 22, 2014

Martinsville City Council Neighborhood Meeting for the Druid Hills/Uptown area was held on September 22, 2014, at NCI, 191 Fayette Street at 7:30 PM, with Mayor Kim Adkins presiding and Council members present including: Vice Mayor Teague, Mark Stroud, Sr., Sharon Brooks Hodge and Danny Turner. Staff present: Leon Towarnicki, Brenda Prillaman, Eric Monday, Coretha Gravely, Sean Dunn, Marshall Thomas, Wayne Knox, Kenneth Draper and Andy Powers.

Mayor Adkins called the meeting to order and asked Andy Powers to give update on the Council tour of Uptown and Druid Hills areas and to present his property maintenance report.

Mayor Adkins opened the floor for citizen comments:

David Varley, 1409 Askin Street – placard has been place on house that burned near his address, and house has been condemned. How long will it stay like that? *Andy Powers indicates with required advertisements for demo, potential asbestos abatement, etc., it could be approximately 12 months before the issue is resolved.*

Ms. Hampton, Third Street – If she files a complaint about a neighbor's property, will that person be made aware of who the complainant is? *Andy Powers responded complainant information is private and not released*

Mrs. Virginia King – regarding property maintenance postings, how does the landlord find out if their property has been posted if the tenant doesn't advise them? *City Attorney responded property maintenance polices have been put into effect to attract the landlords' attention that they must tend to and maintain their property*

Ms. Hedrick, 108 Park Street – mentioned drugs on Park Street and noted landlords need to be more diligent in regard to selecting potential tenants for rental property. *City Attorney responded the city cannot force landlords to run a background check on tenants*

Jennifer Dove, 1019 Jefferson Circle – noted there are houses in her neighborhood that have been boarded up for years, and the properties are maintained to the bare minimum standards, but still an eyesore for the neighborhood – what can be done? *Andy Powers responded with details of how demolitions are done annually according to budget funds available and those properties in worst condition as far as safety and hazards are top priority. AP also inspected 1015 and 1018 Jefferson Circle on 9/23 and found both to be in compliance*

Mrs. Hedrick, 108 Park Street. At or around 120 Park Street there is a sight distance problem with a large tree and possibly limbs in the power lines. *120 Park St. has a holly tree growing up in the service and it will be trimmed by Friday, 11/14/14. PW checked for sight distance issues and did not observe any.*

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Also noted water doesn't drain into the storm drains near this location, drains may be stopped up. *Referred to PW- PW found inlets stopped up with bottles and garbage. Inlets were cleaned and functioning properly now*

Marvin Hairston, 110 Pony Place – What will happen with the Paradise Inn? *It was noted there are federal and state tax liens on the property; the CDC previously looked at the property; and there is currently another group investigating.*

Mrs. Virginia King, 29A Jones Street – can the alley located next to the Sportsman's Club that extends from Fayette over to Main Street be posted for no parking? *After review, City Attorney Monday notes the Fayette St. Alley is proving very elusive to track down on paper. The belief is it is a public right of way because it has habitually been used as such for a period in excess of 15 years, and not because of any deed. No deed has yet been found dedicating it as public, but a search of County records has not been done, where the older records are.*

Chad Martin – can homeowners form a homeowners' association? *City Attorney responded citizens can certainly form their own association, but the problem occurs in getting everyone to become a part of the association to abide by the rules*

Ruby Stultz, 108 Pony Place – tree limbs hanging over electric lines and the street; guardrail needed; mentioned a fatality had occurred. *(Mayor asked that we review City-wide and report – traffic/accident related fatalities?) Insulation peeling off wires at corner of Cardinal Lane/Pony Place. (VM Teague asked that staff provide a future Council update on tree trimming, schedule, process; and pole replacement program). Referred to PW and Electric*

PW Checked and found one limb overhanging the curb at 109 Pony Place. The limb was not obstructing traffic in the roadway. PW crews will remove. Electric inspected and indicated the following: Daniel Morrison spoke with Ms. Stultz this morning and her concerns with the trees are not an Electric Dept. issue but more Property Maintenance related. Fortunately, Skyline was doing some trimming at the apartments next door (whose property the problem trees happen to be on) and we met with Tim and the manager of the apartments. The trees that Ms. Stultz has issues with will be taken down as a part of the job Skyline is doing for the apartments. She also expressed her gratitude for the lights we changed out last week and was satisfied with my response to all of her issues when I left. As far as the insulation coming off the secondary lines, I explained to her that there was no danger and eventually we would get around to reworking the poles. This is the same response we gave her back in September, but other than the insulation coming off, there is nothing wrong with the conductors or the framing.

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From Public Works - PW staff evaluated the need for guardrail at the intersection of Cardinal Lane and Pony Place, specifically along the west side of Cardinal adjacent to 109 Pony Place. It is staff's opinion that neither the physical conditions of the roadway nor police accident records indicate guardrail is warranted at this time. The Transportation Safety Commission will be asked to review for their opinion. PW staff has also evaluated the need for guardrail on the south side of Fayette St. from Pinehall Rd. to the railroad underpass. Guardrail is scheduled to be constructed from Pony Place to the underpass in December. Staff has determined the section of Fayette St. from Pony Place to Pinehall Rd. does not warrant guardrail, but will ask the Transportation Safety Commission to review also. Someone mentioned a fatality had occurred due to the lack of guardrail. After researching recent police accident records and talking with PW Superintendent Eddie Frazier, we have not found any record of a recent fatality. Eddie remembered a fatal accident several years ago where a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed collided with the underpass abutment. This was not a result of a lack of guardrail.

Mrs. Hampton, Third Street – can you cut trees on private property when limbs overhang your property. *City Attorney responded that homeowners have the right to cut vertically, at the property line.*

Councilmember Teague inquired as to the depth of leaves allowed to accumulate on private property before being considered as a PM violation. *After review, City Attorney Monday reports that while it may be theoretically permissible for the City to regulate this, under the theory that a huge amount of fallen leaves may provide a home for vermin, insects, or other health hazards, I have not found a single locality in Virginia that does so*

David Varley, 1409 Askin Street, noted logging has occurred off Askin Street on substantial amount of acreage. Does City know, is this in the City, what's going on there? *This is harvesting of timber on private property; no permits are required; no plans for development of the property have been submitted.*

Tony Jones, 612 Third Street – Looking west from NCI down Fayette Street, any plans by the City to demo any of those properties? Is the City interested in working with private developers? *Staff responded noting there were no plans for demolitions, the West End Working Group has been meeting to discuss this very issue, and the City is open to exploring options with developers and/or possible public/private partnerships*

Willa Mae Harris, 1010 D Street – will voting be moved from the Housing Office? *Staff addressed this at the meeting – no plans to move anything at present, but still investigating options regarding Housing functions*

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Veteran's Housing Vouchers (question by Mayor Adkins) – can City administer, what's happened with that program? Wayne mentioned neither City nor Danville had the capability of administering this and TAP (Roanoke) or STEP (Franklin County) were currently administering. *After further research, Wayne indicates there have not been any new offerings for vouchers for veterans (better known as VASH) to – date from HUD. The vouchers are awarded on a competitive basis, and usually go to larger areas such as Roanoke and Richmond. When future notices are sent regarding the program, City will determine whether we are eligible and have the capacity to administer.*

There being no further business, Mayor Adkins adjourned the meeting at 8:45 pm.

Brenda Prillaman
Clerk of Council

Kim E. Adkins
Mayor