

June 25, 2018 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

Martinsville City Council toured the Southside area on June 25, 2018 beginning at 5:30pm. Those present for the tour were Mayor Gene Teague, Council Member Kathy Lawson, Council Member Sharon Hodge, Vice Mayor Chad Martin and Council Member Jennifer Bowles. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Fire Chief Ted Anderson, Property Maintenance Inspectors Andy Powers and Mark Price, Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Coretha Gravely and Channel 13 Reporter Kyle Wilcox.

The van left the City Municipal Building at 5:30pm. City Manager Towarnicki recapped the neighborhood tour which visited Aaron Street then Roanoke Street to view vehicles parked illegally. The tour drove through Park Street, Union Street, Askin Street, Memorial to Forrest then to Childress Street. The tour continued to Smith Lake Road then back to Aaron Street where Council viewed and discussed the burned properties.

The tour concluded at approximately 6:40pm arriving back at the Municipal Building.

The Southside Neighborhood Meeting was held at Fuller Memorial Church, 1204 Askin Street at 7:30 PM, with Mayor Gene Teague presiding. Other Council Members present included Council Member Kathy Lawson, Council Member Sharon Hodge, Vice Mayor Chad Martin and Council Member Jennifer Bowles. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, City Attorney Eric Monday, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Fire Chief Ted Anderson, Property Maintenance Inspectors Andy Powers and Mark Price, Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Chris Bell, and Officer Coretha Gravely.

Mayor Teague called the meeting to order and asked Pastor Hardy to offer prayer.

Mark Price of the Inspections Department summarized property maintenance and inspection concerns. Price provided his contact number for any resident wishing to contact him with concerns. Price confirmed that the office is complaint based and reports by citizens are confidential.

Mayor Teague opened the meeting up to residents to voice concerns.

Howard Hairston, neighborhood watch captain, expressed concerns about people walking the street late at night; he believes they are homeless. He has tried to help them find shelter. They have started to harass some of the elderly neighbors for money. Police Chief Cassady asked that residents contact the Police Department if this continues and they can offer those people resources and a place to stay or eat

Jean Price, neighborhood watch captain expressed concerns about abandoned cars and asked what else could be done to get them off the street. Blankenship Street has a trash problem and the home next door to her sister-in-law's home on Myrtle Road has excessive trash in the yard. Mayor Teague asked Property Maintenance inspectors to follow up on those areas. Officer Gravely said she has spoken to those residents about the trash problem.

Wilhelmina Roberts, 1010 Paul Street and substitute neighborhood captain referenced the bank on Paul Street covered in kudzu. She said she has called Public Works numerous times but it has not been resolved. Roberts also expressed concern about trash being thrown

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out on Paul Street and says that vehicles from the construction site near Forrest Street and Cole Street have made a terrible mess of the road.

Richard Toler, neighborhood watch captain for Forest Street stated that the issues he reported at the previous meeting related to the carwash as well as the drug dealing concerns in the area have both been resolved by the police department. He asked if the captains could be given notice of questionable activity in the area so that they are aware of what to watch for. Police Chief Cassady said there are neighborhood resource officers throughout the City that are going door-to-door talking to residents and the officer for that area can share those concerns with residents and captains at that time. Resident surveys will hopefully be completed by September so residents will be seeing those officers more over the next few months. Cassady said social media is a great way to engage with the police department and the officers.

Shauna Morton, 1023 Graves Street says she has chosen to keep the two vacant lots on either side of her home wooded but they are having to clean up a huge amount of trash being thrown out and blowing into the woods. Her back yard is flooding with every heavy rain because a neighbor has killed the vegetation on his property. There is a problem with neighbors riding 4-wheelers on the road but by the time the police are called and dispatched they are gone. Morton has two large dogs that are kept in a fence but says there are several small dogs that run free. Speeding in her area has become a problem also including school buses. Officer Bell said the speed trailers track speeders so that he will know the best time to run radar in that area and he will be setting one up in that area soon.

Claudia Spencer, 1047 Oak Street says someone is knocking on the side of her house, windows and on the kitchen door and says that no one responds when she calls 911. Police Chief Cassady said they would increase patrol and he would pull records of reports from that address. Family across the road from her has a dog in the front yard which causes a terrible odor. City Attorney Monday said he would ask Animal Control to check into the care of and tethering of the dog.

Trula Clark, 1124 Askin Street says that there are abandoned cars on the street at the house next door. The owner parks cars in his driveway blocking his exit so he must run over the church curbing; doing this is tracking mud and breaking down the curb. The parked cars also cause a site hazard when pulling out from the church. She also expressed concern over speeders including school buses and trash left in the church parking lot. Neighbors are using church property to walk their dogs and not picking up afterwards.

Mr. Foddrell expressed concerns about speeders on Union Street and littering. He said the neighbors need to stick together and report concerns to the police department. He watches out for the elderly lady next door and says neighbors need to watch out for each other.

James Peverall, 215 Aaron Street expressed concern over the burned property on Aaron Street and provided Council a copy of a letter sent to City Manager Towarnicki. He has

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met with Fire Chief Anderson, City Manager Towarnicki, City Attorney Monday, Commonwealth Attorney Hall, and Wayne Knox in Community Development. He complains that it has been over 18 months and there appears to be a lack of authority and approved action. The properties need to be secured and the City needs to move forward to get the damaged buildings cleared up. Peverall said Mr. Knox has explained the steps being taken using the Brownsfield Grant. Since the owners with the second property have taken no action to correct the damage, the City needs to take whatever action necessary to get it cleaned up. He believes there are also criminal aspects with this case. Mayor Teague explained that Peverall's request had been approved, the topic had been added to the Council agenda for June 26 and Council had received a copy of his letter.

Linda Lowery said that there is a recovery center/junkyard on Memorial and asked if a fence could be installed to hide the eyesore.

Howard Hairston added that on Askin Street, there are a lot of parked cars making it hard to drive through and on the other end there is a basketball goal in the road that attracts teens and kids to play in the road. Officers confirmed that property was located in the County. Teague asked that those concerns be reported to Henry County for resolution.

James Peverall shared a correspondence sent to the City Manager regarding is previous concern about the time taken by Public Works regarding the extended time to paint a fire hydrant. He asked if there is a way to track employee efficiency in performing their job and special projects. He would like a handbook posted to the website. City employee salaries should be posted for public information also. Mayor Teague explained that every department has reduced staff, combined jobs and the City has asked employees to take on additional responsibilities and work call hours without an increase in salary. There is a pay scale that is compared to other area salaries which is proven that the City employees are underpaid; they are expected to work harder with no additional compensation. Teague explained if a study was done, it would determine that more employees are needed and the salaries would be increased to meet average market salaries. Council Member Hodge explained that efficiency studies require hired consultants which would cost the City more and that the budget is listed for public viewing on the website. Council Member Lawson explained that the inmates are already fully utilized. Council Member Bowles said that those employees that Peverall is referencing should be reviewed by public works. Peverall also asked Mr. Knox if Southside could be considered for the next block grant.

Mr. Toler expressed concerns about the paving on Starling Avenue. City Manager Towarnicki said that project should be completed soon.

Council Member Bowles explained that she texted Dr. Talley about the bus speeding. Talley says they have monitors to track the speed of the buses and asked that residents contact him directly and immediately when they see speeders so that it can be looked at. Officer Bell asked that residents contact the police department also.

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Inspector Mark Price shared the policy regarding untagged vehicles and what concerns are handled by Inspections verses the Police department. Officer Bell asked that residents report any concerns in case it's something that has been overlooked.

Dale Handy, 1062 Graves Street expressed concern about abandoned homes on Graves and Summit Street. Teague asked that those properties be reported to Inspections. Price confirmed that the property across from her property has a building permit so there isn't much that they can be done.

There being no further business, Council Member Lawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Council Member Bowles seconded the motion, all Council Members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:43pm

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Gene Teague
Mayor