

October 22, 2018 West Side Neighborhood Meeting

Martinsville City Council toured the West Side area on October 22, 2018 beginning at 5:30pm. Those present for the tour were Council Member Wood, Council Member Lawson, Council Member Bowles, Mayor Teague and Vice Mayor Martin. Staff participating included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Coretha Gravely, Inspector Andy Powers, Inspector Mark Price, and Channel 13 reporter Kyle Wilcox.

The West Side Neighborhood Meeting was held at Albert Harris School, 710 Smith Road, Martinsville, VA at 7:30 PM, with Mayor Teague presiding. Other Council Members present included Council Member Kathy Lawson, Council Member Jim Wood, Vice Mayor Martin and Council Member Jennifer Bowles. Staff present: City Manager Leon Towarnicki, City Attorney Eric Monday, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Assistant Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Coretha Gravely, Inspector Andy Powers, Inspector Mark Price, Martinsville Bulletin Ben Williams.

Mayor Teague called the meeting to order.

City Manager Towarnicki summarized the tour. The tour traveled from City Hall to Spencer Street then High Street to observe the sewer project. The tour then visited the VM Draper project and Fayette Street, traveling to North Street to look at kudzu on utility lines, then Pine Street, Top Street, and Wray Street to discuss properties. Council discussed a potential project on Kings Row. The tour traveled down Fayette to Maplewood Apartments, making note that the liter complaint had been addressed. Council Members discussed Pony Place where there were homes that needed attention and tall grass concerns. The tour then traveled to Cardinal Lane, West End Park, then Roundabout Road to observe a property maintenance home. The tour visited Fayette to Beaver Street, down Memorial to Katherine then onto Smith Rd where there were several abandoned homes, some of which are already on the demolition list. The tour also visited Swanson Street, Spencer to High Street where there was storm debris on a CenturyLink line, Barton Street, then to Moss Street where a few properties were discussed. The tour concluded back at City Hall at 6:20pm. Towarnicki said it is good to get out in the neighborhood and discuss any issues that need to be addressed.

Mark Price, Property Maintenance Inspector summarized inspections, notices and recognized those properties that required action. Price shared his contact number for citizens that would like to contact him with concerns. Price explained that all complaints are posted to the City website and follow-up documented if the complaint is valid or invalid and any action taken or needed.

Dee Galloway 833 Smith Street reports numerous trees that need attention before they cause power outages during storms. Galloway suggested that the power lines be rerouted. Council Member Bowles asked that this location be added to the tree-trimming list.

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Natalie Law, 1212 Roundabout Road asked the status of demolition projects in her area. Towarnicki said title searches are being done and the City is working on funding. Monday said the first 10 homes are almost ready for demolition. Monday explained the purpose of the title search is required by law to give any interested parties proper notification.

James Draper of 119 Crestwood Court explained for the past 10 years, he has been complaining about his neighbor's tree, which is blocking the side of his house; the neighbor refuses to cut the tree but the leaves are falling into his yard and clogging his gutters. Monday explained that he can cut the limbs on his property and if he wants the neighbor to pay, he will have to sue her. Draper said there were visitors to 109 Terrace Street last weekend that connected the power to a home and asked if the City could charge people for connecting the electricity unlawfully. Police Chief said that they do aggressively charge people for unlawfully connecting power and said he would follow up with the officer who responded.

Lawrence Mitchell of 700 Second Street says Beaver Street should not be closed and it is imperative that the City maintain the entrance for residents.

Philip Johnson of Wilson Street expressed concern about an abandoned house that has overgrown grass and trash around the yard and asked that it be looked at by property maintenance. It appears that the pavement is sinking on Wilson Street near a repair site, which needs to be addressed.

Lawrence Mitchell asked the status on the Paradise location. Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox says there is a study completed regarding the condition of the building and another study about the potential future of the building. He asked that residents contact the City Planner to offer suggestions on what could be done with that location that would be useful to residents. Knox explained what a food desert is and a potential timeline of renovating the building if the City pursued any project. Residents discussed the condition of the Paradise. Mitchell expressed concern about the condition of the Paradise and said that it is a health concern. Shirley Frazier of 1310 Cardinal Lane asked for clarification that the grant money for the Paradise be used for West End and not for any other location.

Lawrence Mitchell asked who suggested a playground on the corner of Fayette and Second Street. Knox explained that the playground has nothing to do with the City. There is a nonprofit organization that comes up with projects to upgrade the Westend area. During a brainstorm session, the topic was brought up but it was just an idea; the playground will not happen unless the City buys the property which is unlikely.

Frazier asked about the former housing office building now used by Piedmont Community Services. Mayor Teague explained the procedure followed to allow PCS to use the property and announced the ribbon cutting for October 23, 2018. Willa Mae Harris of 1010 D Street says allowing the Piedmont Community Services into that location was one of the best moves in the

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community in a while, stating that they keep the property in good condition. She hopes they will never add a recreation center or playground at that area.

Wayne Knox explained during the tour, he and Council look at properties that are on the demolition list or properties close to qualifying. He explained that some properties could qualify for a grant to renovate properties for resell. He asked residents to contact his office if they know of property that could qualify for these projects. Resident pointed out a residence that needs attention.

Dennis Hairston of 515 Letcher Street is curious about the AMP Ohio agreement and if the City would still be under the contract if the City reverts.

Lawrence Mitchell asked when Jim Woods was appointed to Council, Woods said he did not have an “agenda” and asked if he had an “agenda” now. Woods explained that his agenda is to represent all residents in the City and County, working in a relationship with other Council Members to bring a consensus and provide a mouthpiece to residents to build the community and build relationships instead of focusing the negative.

Resident asked about generating power in the area. Teague explained the hydro plant and the landfill projects which provides 3-4% of local power.

Resident asked about having signs installed on Smith Road to prevent large trucks in the neighborhood.

Ruby Stultz, 108 Pony Place expressed concern for traffic on Kohler Road, specifically tractor trailers and requested a better location for signage to detour traffic and avoid speeding

Mayor Teague thanked residents for coming out and sharing their concerns.

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

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Karen Roberts  
Clerk of Council

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Gene Teague  
Mayor