

April 22, 2019 Southside Neighborhood Meeting

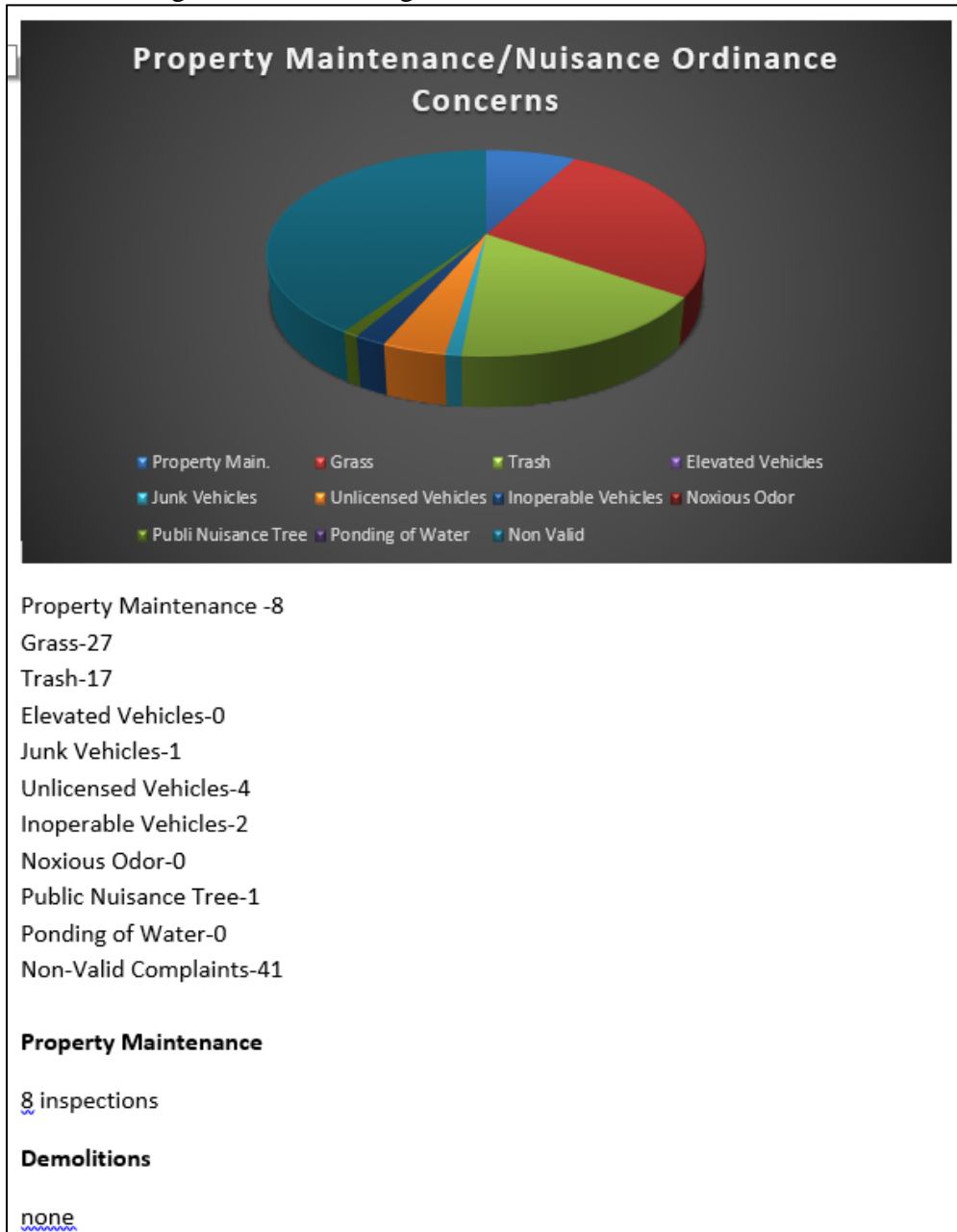
Martinsville City Council toured the Southside area on April 22, 2019 beginning at 5:30pm. Those present for the tour were Mayor Lawson, Vice Mayor Martin, Council Member Bowles and Council Member Woods. Council Member Turner did not attend the tour. Staff participating included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Police Chief Eddie Cassidy, Officer Coretha Gravely, Inspector Andy Powers, Inspector Mark Price, and Building Inspector Kris Bridges, IT Director Esther Artis and a Channel 13 reporter.

The tour began at 5:30 from the rear of the Municipal Building. Attendees left the municipal building traveling to Broad Street, Church Street then to Roanoke Street. Some houses were noted with tall grass or property of disrepair, those locations had already been documented. A house on Wingfield with dogs, which is known to the Police Department, was discussed. The tour traveled south to Askin Street and Knoll Street where vacant homes were noted. Back to Askin Street, Overland, then Birch to the DuPont Complex where the new jail is being built. Council Members traveled to Memorial, Starling, Cliff, Paul, Chalmers, Highland, and Forest, on to Village Street where several properties were noted in disrepair or tall grass and had been posted previously. Attendees discussed paving on Village Street then traveled to Smith Lake, Childress, Forest Lake, and Starling then to Wilson Street where a residential lot is used to store vehicles. The tour continued to Memorial, across the Fayette Street intersection, West Church Street, Barton, Preston, Cole and on to Moss Street. The tour concluded at City Hall at 6:30pm. Towarnicki said this year, conditions seemed to be a lot better than years past with no significant problems. The Inspections department and police department have been working diligently to monitor and post residences of concern.

The Southside Neighborhood meeting was held at Wesley Memorial Methodist Church, 824 Starling Avenue in Martinsville beginning at 7:30pm. Those present for the tour attended the meeting along with Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox and Clerk of Council Karen Roberts.

Mayor Lawson called the meeting to order. City Manager Towarnicki summarized the tour.

Mark Price, Property Inspector summarized inspections, notices and recognized those properties that required action. Price explained that all complaints are posted to the City website, follow-up is documented if the complaint is valid or invalid, and if any action is taken or needed. Price provided the contact number to the Inspections department and welcomed residents to contact them with any reports and concerns.



Phillip Johnson, 206 Wilson Street said the property at 216 Wilson Street has been abandoned and is in bad shape with weeds, trash outside, windows have been open for months and and the property is an eyesore and needs attention. Johnson expressed concern about speeders on Wilson Street and cars sitting on Woodrow Street that are obstructing the intersection. Council Member Bowles asked Chief Cassady about speed limit signs and parking the speed trailer or ghost car to help correct those concerns.

Betty Cannaday, 230 Park Street is having trouble with people walking through her yard, leaving a trail from the road and some of her property has been stolen. If she catches them on camera, can she require them to pay to have grass reseeded? Police Chief Cassady asked her to contact the police the next time she saw someone trespassing.

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Annie Martin 1005 Hall Street says 1006 Hall Street has been abandoned with no trespassing signs but owner does nothing to maintain the property and it needs several repairs. Another residence had multiple trash bags sitting on their steps for days with no one picking those up.

Ms. Bowers, 1042 Oak Street explained that her neighbor at 1040 Oak Street has a dog chained up and junk in the yard. The animal warden did require them to build a doghouse but nothing else has been done. Bowers said the dog was moved earlier today when the tenants heard about the neighborhood tour.

Ms Royal, 210 Emmett Street mentioned a car detailing business on Memorial and expressed concerns about the workers speeding on Spring Street to dry off the cars. Royal mentioned a vacant house at 200 Emmett Street that has tall grass and rats. Inspections is aware of the property and will follow up.

Lee Bowers, 1042 Oak Street said the grass at 1040 Oak Street is very tall. There is a parked car and lots of trash at the fence line to her property and multiple rat holes.

Gene Cardwell of 1038 Oak Street says the neighbors on Graves Street are throwing the garbage down the hill and it is only visible when the leaves are off the trees.

Claudia Spencer of 1047 Oak Street said someone has been messing around her house at night, knocking on her door and on the side of her house. She says no one shows up when she calls the police. She has a camera outside her house now with hopes of finding out who it is.

Shirley Cockram of 212 Wilson Street complained that residents of 800 Starling Avenue throw trash out the back door and it blows down the street.

Council Member Turner asked City Manager Towarnicki about the Aaron Street properties. Towarnicki stated that the Hiatt property has been secured. The City has met with the Martin Family about getting that property secured. Towarnicki explained that they are almost ready to reopen Aaron Street to thru traffic. There will be a new ordinance adopted which will give the City Attorney more permission to require the property be demolished and/or safely secured.

Betty Sloan of 218 Grayson Street thanked the Police Department for trying to clean up her street. She says she had to sneak out of her home to attend the meeting today. Her neighbors at 216 Grayson Street sit in their car all day and all night playing music continuously. They wait until trash truck runs before they put their bags outside then leave them out all week. She feels like she is a prisoner in her home and that she cannot say anything to those who are hanging around. Police Chief Cassady said sometimes officers are busy but they will send another officer to check into the report and asked Sloan to please call if there are concerns or loud music to report. Even if they do not catch them the first time, Cassady asked her to keep reporting so they could catch them next time. Cassady said drug investigations take time but the police department is working on those concerns. Officer Gravely asked that the residents not approach the problem residents, but to call the Police and let them do their job to resolve the concerns.

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Mayor Lawson asked residents not to assist or donate to panhandlers in the city; panhandling is illegal in Martinsville.

Faye Deshazo of 1022 Oak Street asked how long it takes abandoned homes to be repaired or demolished. Kris Bridges said there are a lot of homes that look bad but a lot more that are structurally dangerous which get more of the Inspection's attention. As those properties are demolished or repaired, then the next level of homes will take priority. It is the property owner's responsibility to repair those properties. Deshazo said she complains so often that she feels the police department does not take her seriously. She asked what the roll of a resource officer is and why there is not one available on Oak Street, stating that she only saw him during the surveys. Cassady said there is an officer assigned to that area and that Cassady has patrolled the street personally. Cassady said he would check to see which officer was assigned to her neighborhood. Deshazo says she is the neighborhood watch captain and wants a face-to-face with the resource officer so she can communicate better with him.

Mayor Lawson confirmed that there is an ordinance making property owners responsible for tenant actions, however, there is a process before action can be taken.

Officer Gravely explained that is what neighborhood watch is about – neighbors watching out for neighbors. Officers cannot do this alone; they need the help of the residents to work together.

With no further questions, the meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson
Mayor