

March 21, 2016

Martinsville City Council toured the Northside and Chatham Heights area on March 21, 2016 beginning at 5:00pm. Those present for the tour were Council Member Teague, Mayor Turner, Vice Mayor Bowles, and Council Member Hodge. Council Member Stroud was absent from the tour. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Property Maintenance Inspector Andy Powers, Property Maintenance Inspector Mark Price, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Fire Chief Ted Anderson, and Officer Coretha Gravely. Paul Collins of the Martinsville Bulletin was also present for the tour.

The tour went down Dillard Street and Warren Court to look at houses within the Northside CDBG project where they discussed the schedule and details related to several specific locations. The tour then went to Lester Lane to look at the area being considered for abandonment at the upcoming Council meeting. From there they went from Lester Lane north on Liberty Street where the Mayor briefly discussed the details related to the funeral and procession on Saturday for SFC Raymond McMillian which would be coming from Collinsville to Roselawn Cemetery. The tour traveled along Grayson Street from Liberty then east to Barrows Mill Road, noting a dog issue and an abandoned house in the 900 block. They then took Ainsley Street back down to Barrows Mill Road and then out Clearview Drive, cutting through Arden Circle by the landfill and transfer station, over Chatham Heights Road, over to Grandview by the water tank, then back out to Chatham Road. The tour traveled along Banks and Myrtle Roads, noting the City-owned house at 926 Myrtle Road that was purchased and rehabbed under the Neighborhood Stabilization Program then to Bethel Lane where the water tank demolition and condition of apartments at the end of Bethel Lane was discussed. The tour ended back at the Municipal Building around 6:00 pm.

The Northside and Chatham Heights Neighborhood Meeting was held at the Clearview Wesleyan Church, 925 Barrows Mill Road, Martinsville, VA at 7:30 PM, with Mayor Danny Turner presiding and Council Members present including: Vice Mayor Jennifer Bowles, Council Member Teague, Council Member Stroud, and Council Member Hodge. Staff present: City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Police Chief Sean Dunn, Officer Coretha Gravely, Inspector Andy Powers, Inspector Mark Price, Fire Chief Ted Anderson and Commonwealth Attorney Clay Gravely.

Mayor Turner called the meeting to order.

Andy Powers introduced Mark Price who will be serving as the new Nuisance Ordinance Inspector. Powers then summarized the neighborhood tour and provided an update on the property maintenance report.

Turner asked about current burn laws. Powers stated that Martinsville is under the Governor's Burn Ban through April 30, which states that a resident cannot burn before 4pm and in the City limits the fire must be out by 8pm. Items that are acceptable to burn are ordinary yard waste and limbs smaller than 4" in diameter. Fires must be supervised, 300ft away from dead vegetation and resident must have some means of distinguishing the fire.

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Ted Anderson shared his excitement to have Mark Price on board. He said the new Property Maintenance process is working well, explaining if a property is not compliant then it is posted then those locations will be added to the live link online. The minimum charge to cut grass on properties is \$225 so he advises people to check the computer link and vacant properties to be sure those have not been posted. He says his department welcomes comments and opinions on ways to improve. He advised that on March 22, 2016 the City will hold a tornado drill day. Code Red residents have already received an alert explaining the drill and at 9:45am March 22, 2016 all sirens around the City will run full blast for three minutes. The closest siren to Northside is on Clearview Drive.

Wayne Knox updated residents on the Dillard, Franklin, Ruffin and Warren Court projects which includes rehabilitating and replacing homes in that area. If residents know someone who needs a new home, please contact him and they can work out financing or a lease/purchase agreement. He stated there is also reconstruction of streets in that area with anticipated work on Franklin Street to be complete this summer. Once homeowner properties are complete then they will move onto rental properties since this is a neighborhood grant. He hopes the Northside project will be completed by January 2017. Turner asked where the next project would take place. Knox said his department is looking at other neighborhoods that meet the requirements and the area on Westend near the Paradise Inn is being considered next.

Chief Dunn said he doesn't have any updates but would be glad to answer any questions and thanked Officer Gravely for her continued help within the community. He stated that crime is down 18% from 2013. Council Member Hodge stated that she noticed a high volume of dog related calls on his previous report. Dunn confirmed there was an increase which makes things difficult on EC Stone. Stone is the only animal control officer and also oversees the pound. He asked that everyone be conscientious animal owners and take care of your animals. Dunn said if a dog gets loose and is not a danger then the officer will return the dog to the owner or will contact the owner if the dog has been taken to the pound. If the dog is dangerous or if it's a continuous problem the owner could be charged and fined. Officer Gravely said they will instruct the owner what they need to do and they will follow up with them a few days later to ensure they are compliant. Janet Mullins, 1000 block Owens Road asked if there was a time limit on having to listen to the dogs barking. Dunn suggested if she had contacted the owner with no luck then she should call the Police Department so they can get involved.

A resident reported a problem with noise in her apartment complex on Blankenship Road from visitors and their stereos being too loud. Gravely offered to talk to the apartment manager about adding a sign instructing visitors to turn the radio down when entering so that the Police Department could better enforce the rules.

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A resident reported a problem with trash on the 900 block of Blankenship Road, stating that people are putting trash out on Monday before Thursday pickup. City Manager Towarnicki explained the City Code which states that trash should be put on the curb the morning of their scheduled pickup but they allow residents to put out the night before. He explained that Public Works has preprinted forms that can be left for those residents to remind them of the policy.

A resident asked what the policy was on trash laying in a neighbor's yard. Powers explained that if the inspector can see the trash from any road then it's considered a public nuisance. If the trash is in a yard not visible from a road then it's considered a private nuisance and complaints could be handled through the courts.

Clay Gravely, Commonwealth Attorney introduced himself and further iterated that if there is an issue with a neighbor's dog to contact the Police Department and he would pursue charges in court if necessary.

A resident on Glade Street expressed concerns about kids playing in the road, property missing, and damage to his car from a bb gun. Officer Gravely said she had spoken to the juvenile and his mother who was responsible for the damage and Chief Dunn said he could contact social services to see if they can get involved.

Lane and Rhonda Shively, 304 Grayson Street expressed concern about a dilapidated house across the road at 307 Grayson which is in the County. They asked if Council has any influence on what the County decides to do with this property. The kids in the neighborhood are playing in the home and they said the property is dangerous. Teague asked if the County can condemn the house and asked if Inspections could write a letter to the County requesting the property be condemned. Andersen says the County is limited in what they can do but he would be happy to contact them to see what options they have. Officer Gravely said she would contact the County also to have the home boarded back up securely.

Officer Gravely stated that there are residents with multiple dogs and puppies and suggested that residents be reminded of the maximum number of dogs they are allowed without having to obtain a kennel license. Council Member Teague suggested involving the SPCA and have them make a video that can be shared on MGTV to educate residents.

There being no further business at 8:25pm, Council Member Hodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Vice Mayor Bowles seconded the motion, all Council Members voted in favor.

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Danny Turner
Mayor