

March 27, 2017 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

Martinsville City Council toured the Northside and Chatham Heights area on March 27, 2017 beginning at 5:30pm. Those present for the tour were Mayor Gene Teague, Vice Mayor Chad Martin, Council Member Kathy Lawson, Council Member Jennifer Bowles and Council Member Sharon Hodge. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Property Maintenance Inspector Andy Powers, Property Maintenance Inspector Mark Price, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Assistant Police Chief Eddie Cassady and Officer Coretha Gravely. Mickey Powell of the Martinsville Bulletin was also present for the tour.

The van left the City Municipal Building at 5:30pm, traveled down to Dillard Street and Warren Court. Wayne Knox described various elements of the Northside CDBG project. Council looked at several houses that have been completed as well as several yet to be done. The tour proceeded to Liberty Street, Stultz Road, Melody Lane, Northview Gardens, Commerce Court, back to Liberty Street, then headed north to Greyson Street. Council looked at several houses on the north side of Greyson Street; although these homes were in the County, the City has received several complaints on those. The homes did look dilapidated but they were boarded up, secured and essentially meet requirements at this time. The tour proceeded to Barrows Mill Road and toured Vine, Luck, Glade, and Ainsley Streets. The van traveled back to BMR and Roselawn Heights to look at a recently burned house, proceeded to Clearview Drive, out to Chatham Road, then toured Banks and Myrtle Roads. Council also looked at the City Park and playground on Garden Lane. On the way back to the Municipal Building, Council looked at an area on Stoneway Drive that Mr. Powell discussed. Tour concluded at approximately 6:40 pm arriving back at the Municipal Building.

The Northside and Chatham Heights Neighborhood Meeting was held at Chatham Heights Baptist Church, 1235 Chatham Heights, Martinsville, VA at 7:30 PM, with Mayor Gene Teague presiding. Other Council Members present included Vice Mayor Chad Martin, Council Member Sharon Hodge, Council Member Kathy Lawson, and Council Member Jennifer Bowles. Staff present: City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts, Assistant City Manager Wayne Knox, Assistant Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Coretha Gravely, Inspector Andy Powers, Inspector Mark Price, and Fire Chief Ted Anderson

Mayor Teague called the meeting to order.

Mark Price summarized the neighborhood tour and provided an update on the property maintenance report including a home on Barrows Mill Road. There have been 70 complaints and 147 inspections since the last meeting in addition to 9 demolition permits and 30 property maintenance notices. Council Member Hodge asked with property maintenance notices, what is the general turnaround time? Price said it depends on the issue and they are willing to work with residents to allow adequate time to get issues corrected. Mayor Teague asked Price to review the policy on cutting grass and at what point does it become a property maintenance issue.

March 27, 2017 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

Price said if front and side yards are cut and not the backyard then it will pass inspection since the area seen from the road is being maintained. The fee to cut grass is \$220 minimum. Once posted, the property owner has 7 days to mow the yard; habitual offenders only get 3 days to correct the issue. City Manager Towarnicki said the process was changed a few years back; properties can be cited by Inspections and Police. The whole process now takes days instead of weeks. Notices can be tracked online through the City website. Ted Anderson encouraged property owners to check the website regularly since the notices are not mailed so if the landlord doesn't get the notice they will still be responsible for the bill. Price said even if there is no home on the property, a stake is driven in the ground for the notice to be posted. Resident asked what the City considers "junk" on properties that would be visible from the road. Price said anything that is not considered an outdoor item should be stored out of sight. Monday explained that Inspections is a complaint based system. No one goes around the City looking for infractions so it is up to the Police Department to spot those locations or residents to call it in and report it. Resident asked about litter on Chatham Road and asked what the best way to take care of that would be. Towarnicki said he would relay the information to the Sheriff's Department and inmate crews would take care of it.

Fire Department briefly discussed the smoke alarm installation program in conjunction with the Red Cross.

Robert Lee, 917 Askin Street – expressed concern about speed and wrong way traffic on Askin Street. Assistant Police Chief Eddie Cassady said they would monitor it, maybe park the ghost car and add extra patrol. Lee expressed concern over an extremely high electric bill for a resident on Park Street and questioned why taxes are going up in the City. Council Member Hodge suggested that the resident contact the Electric Department and request an audit. Staff will research the electric bill for resident on Park Street and Council Members explained that taxes have not increased recently and there has been no decision by Council to raise taxes.

George Sloan, 218 Grayson Street – stated his neighbor has trash all over the driveway and the bank. Property was visited during the tour and Inspections will check to see if a property/nuisance ordinance violation exists. Mr. Sloan also commented about speeding traffic on Greyson St. Cassady responded, indicating options such as extra patrol and the radar trailer would be explored.

Ms. Wheeler asked about visibility at stop signs on Banks Road and Chatham Heights obstructed by bushes and cars. The Transportation Safety Committee will look into this area and if there is a visibility hazard they will add no parking signs and monitor overgrown bushes.

Mr. McCain, Augusta Street in the County – stated that he drives through the City and is noticing a lot of litter on Augusta Street and Chatham Heights and states that people are parking on the wrong side of the road. It was noted this is a route frequently used by trucks

March 27, 2017 Neighborhood Tour and Meeting

traveling to the transfer station. Cassady confirmed that parking on the wrong side of the road is against the law and that officers try to notify citizens before issuing tickets but neighborhood resources officers are addressing this issue more often. Officer Gravely suggested this be added to the website and Channel 22 to let citizens know that illegal parking will be enforced. Mayor Teague said it would also be explained at Council on Tuesday night. Council Member Hodge suggested that if the Fire Department is going door-to-door about smoke detectors that they mention the parking situation. The need for more frequent litter cleanup along this area will be passed along to Public Works and the Jail Annex.

Assistant Police Chief Cassady invited the residents to Lunch with a Cop on Thursday March 30 11:00am-1:00 at Chick-Fil-A; several officers will be present. Cassady informed the public that the Neighborhood resource officers are going door to door visiting residents and if a resident is not home, the officers are leaving their card in case the resident needs to reach them.

Fire Chief Ted Anderson stated that the smoke alarm program was a huge success. Program has been offered 10 years and installations are handled the 3rd Saturday of each month. They are currently in the Starling Avenue area but residents are welcome to call if they are in need of alarms, they do not need to wait for the Fire Department to be in their area. Anderson said this was a joint program with American Red Cross and the detectors installed will last approximately 10 years while other detectors require a battery change every 6 months. Anderson encouraged residents to test their detector once a month. Henry County offers the same program. Resident asked if they will install or test carbon monoxide detectors, Anderson said they would. Resident asked if there was a detector available for residents who are hard of hearing; Anderson confirmed there are detectors to alert residents who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Mayor Teague thanked Chatham Heights Baptist Church for hosting the neighborhood meeting. There being no further business, Council Member Hodge made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Council Member Bowles seconded the motion, all Council Members voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 8:11pm

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Gene Teague
Mayor