

AD HOC BLIGHT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF TUESDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2019

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Blight Committee was held on Tuesday, October 29, 2019 in the Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, Manistee, Michigan. The meeting commenced at 2:27 p.m.

PRESENT: Kelly Greve, Susie Cooper, Robert Hornkohl, Shawn Waruszewski, Kathryn Levy, Kathy Grabowski, Dennis Otto, Timothy Kozal (Committee Leader)

OTHERS PRESENT: Officer Douglas VanSickle, Caitlyn Berard, Jim Grabowski

PURPOSE: To discuss and provide recommendations to City Council on the prevention and elimination of contributing factors and causes of blight.

DISCUSSION

Officer Douglas VanSickle with the Manistee City Police Department was introduced as the point person for handling blight complaints. Officer VanSickle walked committee through the lengthy, drawn-out process of what occurred with the property located at 2 Duffy Street. The City of Manistee now owns the property and will incur costs if the proper is razed.

Officer VanSickle also detailed the process of handling a blight complaint from the very first contact with registered owner to the possible contempt charges that a court may issue.

Discussion on whether residential and commercial fines for blight are the same.

Significant discussion on the hiring an officer to handle blight or requesting an officer be allowed additional hours from March-November to solely handle blight issues.

Significant discussion on the registry process for rental properties ensued. It was noted that the City can acquire a master list of rentals from Spicer Group.

Noted was that the State of Michigan currently does building inspections which check for code violations and the State does not do blight inspections. SAFEbuilt will be taking on the issuance of permits in 2020; however, it was noted that inspections and issuance of permits are two separate entities.

The annual trash pickup that was previously held was discussed. Significant discussion on whether this matter could be reinstated.

Discussion ensued on fines for blight violations. Any changes and/or updates to City ordinances must be taken to the Ordinance Committee. The ultimate decision on ordinance revisions is decided upon by City Council.

Discussion on whether a State of Michigan law for burned out residences exists.

Discussion on the Manistee Housing Commission being cited for properties owned by them.

Discussion on the possibility of holding an open forum to discuss blight which would solely be an educational forum.

The root causes of blight were discussed as possibly being:

1. A possible lack of education
2. Issue may possibly be a civil matter
3. The matter may be driven by socio-economic issues

Issues to be addressed at next Ad Hoc Blight Committee meeting may include: the rental inspection checklist, scope of what SAFEbuilt handles, commercial versus residential fines, State of Michigan law regarding burned out residences, possibility of citing Manistee Housing Commission for blight violations on properties owned by the Commission.

The next Ad Hoc Blight Committee meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. in the Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, Manistee, Michigan.

The meeting concluded at 3:44 p.m.

Bridget Guillen
Police Secretary

NOTE: The meeting time has been changed from 2:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, December 3, 2019.