

AD HOC BLIGHT COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF TUESDAY, JANUARY 7, 2020

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Blight Committee was held on Tuesday, January 7, 2020 in the Second Floor Conference Room, City Hall, Manistee, Michigan. The meeting commenced at 1:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Robert Hornkohl, Shawn Waruszewski, Kathryn Levy, Kathy Grabowski, Timothy Kozal (Committee Leader)

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Grabowski, Scott Fraly (Manistee News Advocate)

ABSENT: Kelly Greve, Susie Cooper, Dennis Otto

DISCUSSION

A rough draft of the amended blight ordinance as compiled by Levy was distributed to all in attendance.

Discussion took place regarding the timetable for future meetings of the committee. It was noted that the next committee meeting will be Tuesday, February 4, 2020 so that the committee may make their recommendations of what should be presented to City Council. On Tuesday, February 11, 2020 the committee's findings will be presented to the City Council work session at 7:00 p.m. If there is consensus from the work session to proceed to full Council that would take place at the City Council meeting which will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

The four (4) areas that could be taken to City Council are as follows:

1. The hiring of a blight officer.
2. Amend the current blight ordinance.
3. Establish fines & costs for violations with fines & costs escalating if issue not resolved after first notice/citation.
4. Establish a rubbish collection twice a year for pickup of any and/or all unwanted items placed out for disposal.

The City is now utilizing SAFEbuilt for issuance of certain permits (not related to blight, per se.) SAFEbuilt will be generating a weekly report for permits issued in the City. Contact should be made with SAFEbuilt to ascertain if they can assist in any way with blight issues and/or any information SAFEbuilt could provide regarding blight.

Proposed penalties and fines for blight violations could be as follows:

1. \$100
2. \$250
3. \$500

Discussion held on two (2) properties downtown that have been boarded up for a considerable amount of time. Consensus that the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the Historical Commission should work together to monitor progress on any structures in the downtown area that have active permits in place to ensure that significant positive progress being made on the structure(s) before issuing any further/additional permits.

The cost of the proposed rubbish collection was discussed and the need for a vendor to perform the collection, rather than the City of Manistee Department of Public Works performing the collection as it is not feasible for DPW to perform the collection.

Consensus that the committee could be more proactive and it is felt that more can be done if the committee is an active presence in the City, starting by including information/education regarding blight issues in the City newsletter.

The need for an informational public forum regarding educating the citizens on blight definitions, how to report it, tools available to combat blight, etc. was discussed.

The need to move from an Ad Hoc committee to a Standing Committee on blight was discussed.

Five (5) priorities emerged that were as follows:

1. Hire a part-time blight officer.
2. Amend the current blight ordinance.
3. Establish fines & costs for violations with fines & costs escalating if issue not resolved after first notice/citation.
4. Establish a rubbish collection twice a year for pickup of any and/or all unwanted items placed out for disposal
5. Establish a Standing Committee for blight.

Other miscellaneous discussion was held on building permit timelines and the urgent need to address the River Street structures that are clearly blighted structures. Also mentioned was the Bay City, Michigan blight program and the significant progress that community has made in dealing with blight issues.

Future timeline/meeting dates:

February 4, 2020 at 1:30 p.m. – Ad Hoc Committee meeting-2nd floor Conference Room, City Hall

February 11, 2020 at 7 p.m. – City Council Chambers – City Council work session.

February 18, 2020 at 7 p.m. – City Council Chambers – City Council meeting. If City Council at the meeting on the 11th has a consensus, recommendations will then be brought before the full council.

Meeting concluded at 2:12 p.m.

Bridget Guillen
Police Secretary

Attachments:

Rough draft of the amended blight ordinance