

**AD HOC BLIGHT COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2021**

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Blight Committee was held on Wednesday, February 24, 2021. The meeting was held remotely via video conferencing with real-time messaging available. The meeting commenced at 11:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Mitch Deitsch, Kelly Greve, Dennis Otto, Chief Glass (Committee Facilitator)

ABSENT: Kathy Grabowski, Andy Lee, Robert Hornkohl, Mary Russell

OTHERS ATTENDING: None

DISCUSSION

A new member to the committee, Mitch Deisch, was introduced.

Possible resources for assisting citizens with blight issues were identified with the United Way being mentioned as potentially wishing to have a level of participation. A point of contact for Habitat for Humanity was also mentioned and their volunteers possibly being able to assist citizens with blight issues. The Manistee City Police Department could serve as a liaison.

The Manistee City Police Department roles for blight are educating and enforcement. Volunteer groups were presented as a possible avenue of assistance. Volunteer group assistance will be vital as the Manistee City Police Department is not always able to physically or financially able to handle all blight assistance issues. The committee was reminded that the Manistee City Police Department does education first and foremost when contacting property owners with blight issues. It is hoped that compassionate enforcement by managing expectations is the goal of the committee.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed blight ordinance amendment. The proposed amendment has been presented to City Council but has not yet been adopted by City Council. The purpose of amending the ordinance is to remove obstacles in order to attain enforcement in a more expedient manner. Municipal citations, which are thought to streamline the process, rather than court citations, will be issued to violators if the amended ordinance is adopted. If the amendment is approved by City Council, there will be a media push through the newspaper and social media outlets to inform the citizens of the changes.

Concerns from committee members ranged from costs for demolition of blighted structures, creating a list of properties to be demolished and the process for demolishing a blighted structure. Discussion ensued as to how many structures up for tax foreclosure are blighted structures. Rental structures were discussed as the committee believes they contribute significantly to blight issues. SAFEbuilt is active in the area but has limited manpower to do rental inspections. The committee discussed absentee landlords (landlord who are not community members) and the thought is that landlords should be held accountable for structural blight issues with rental properties.

The committee would like to see city-owned properties that might be considered blight to be improved, with the thought of perhaps a trickle-down effect as once the city improves city-owned property than citizens would step up and address blight issues at their residences. It was offered by member Deitsch that he would prepare a resolution outlining 6 areas the city could address in regards to blight issues.

A list of prequalified contractors to contact for blight remediation was discussed, with the committee being requested to contact other cities to learn how such a list might be compiled and the criteria for being included on such a list.

The history of the committee was discussed with the committee having approximately over one year of existence. The Manistee City Council recommended in 2020 to continue the Ad Hoc Blight Committee but the future of the committee going forward has not been addressed by City Council recently. The committee would like to extend an invitation to a City Council member to serve on the Ad Hoc Blight Committee. An informal survey of the committee will be done to see which members wish to continue serving on the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Submitted by:

Bridget Guillen
Police Secretary