

AD HOC BLIGHT COMMITTEE MINUTES OF WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2021

A meeting of the Ad Hoc Blight Committee was held on Wednesday, March 31, 2021. The meeting was held remotely via video conferencing with real-time messaging available. The meeting commenced at 11:02 a.m.

PRESENT: Mitch Deisch, Kelly Greve, Kathy Grabowski, Mary Russell, Chief Glass (Committee Facilitator)

ABSENT, Andy Lee, Robert Hornkohl, Dennis Otto

OTHERS ATTENDING: None

DISCUSSION

Chief Glass commenced the meeting with a review of the purpose statement of an Ad Hoc committee and why an Ad Hoc committee might exist.

Chief Glass presented the following: the blight districts have been reorganized and officers have been assigned to each district, the blight ordinance has been amended and adopted by City Council.

Discussion on the draft of City of Manistee resolution, containing six areas of note, as drafted by member Deisch, centered on private property blight versus city owned blighted properties/structures. If adopted by City Council, the resolution would serve as support for blight eradication and offer the committee's assistance in serving the city with potential blight issues. The resolution will be revised with changes in language so as not to come across as negative or harsh.

A mission statement and what it might convey was discussed. Primary residents versus seasonal residents/tourists were discussed with mention being made to clean up the city for guests but to also make city residents the primary focus as they are the ones who live in the neighborhoods year-round and would like their respective neighborhoods to be "liveable."

A work session should be the first initial step in bringing forth the resolution as it an informal event and interest could be garnered to see if there is support for the actual resolution at that time. The mission statement can also be confirmed at the work session. If support exists, the resolution should be presented to City Council as a formal resolution that would address the first six issues on the resolution as recommendations and it should include signatures to convey the importance of the document.

Discussion also ensued on the need for the committee to become a standing committee rather than an ad hoc committee. A standing committee would make recommendations to City Council and assist City Council and police officers with recommendations.

Committee believes a majority of blight issues to be private property blight versus city owned blighted properties/structures. An effort must be made to accordingly funnel any blight funds to private property versus city owned property so that one group does not garner more of the funds than the other group. City funds are being requested in the next budget year in the amount of \$30,000 for the utilization of demolition of blighted structures.

The scope of blight was discussed with the suggestion that a listing of the degrees of blight might be beneficial, along with a list of rental owned blighted properties versus private individual owned blighted properties. Chief Glass has requested each officer to prepare a list for their respective district that would enumerate how many properties could benefit from demolition, how many properties have junk in the yard, how many properties have junk vehicles, and overall, how many blighted structures there are in that district. Each officer would also detail what they feel are the top 10 priorities to address in their respective district. It is believed that such efforts will help to shape expectations through enforcement.

It is believed that the enforcement for private property blight is somewhat different than the enforcement for city owned blight. It is believed that if the city were to address some of the city issues it would create a good example for the citizens and would allow the city to lead efforts by leading by example.

Local community action group "Manistee Proud" is ready for a project to assist with blight remediation. This group was created in 2020 but due to the pandemic is now ready to begin implementation of its efforts. Due to potential liability issues, the City Attorney must be contacted before any public volunteer group can begin assisting the City with any services. A discussion will need to take place between the City Manager and the City Attorney regarding potential liability issues.

Blight on River Street was discussed with the thought being that progress is being made but there are still issues with some dwellings located directly on River Street and how best to address the problem dwellings.

It is hoped that some sort of collaboration might occur between the City of Manistee and Manistee County regarding properties that end up on the tax rolls of Manistee County. Often, properties are sold by the County and then the process begins all over again as the new owner(s) are unable to maintain the property and the blight process starts again. It is hoped that any conversation between the City Manager and the County Administrator would address such an issue.

Meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

Submitted by:

Bridget Guillen
Police Secretary