



CITY COUNCIL

Housing, Economic Development & Strategies Committee

Meeting Report Monday, June 4, 2012

Committee Members Attending: R. Corcoran, Chair, J. Waltman, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz

Others Attending: L. Kelleher, R. Natale, C. Younger, E. Lloyd

Mr. Corcoran, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 5:43 pm.

Maryanne Ciarlone requested permission to address the committee. Mr. Corcoran agreed to provide Ms. Ciarlone with a comment period of 3 minutes.

Ms. Ciarlone expressed the belief that the inclusion of language in minutes of this committee relating to the inclusion or invitation to REIA (Real Estate Investors Association) is erroneous as an invitation was never made through REIA Secretary Tina Furman. She suggested recording committee meetings for public consumption.

Mr. Corcoran and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz asked Ms. Kelleher if committee meetings were ever recorded. Ms. Kelleher stated that committee meetings have never been recorded as committee sessions are considered informal working group meetings. She also stated that Council cannot prohibit the public from recording committee meetings as the meetings are considered public meetings. She noted that Bill No. 27-2012 places regulation around the public's ability to record meetings.

Ms. Kelleher reported receiving an email from Mr. Agudo, who requested altering the timing of the QoL discussion as he is needed on a conference call with the Mayor and Council President and Edmonton officials.

Certificate of Transfer

Mr. Natale distributed his monthly report and a power point on the Certificate of Transfer process. He stated that he is in the process of hiring the personnel needed to successfully run

the post-settlement inspection associated with the Certificate of Transfer program and to provide for rental inspections every 2-3 years. He stated that some connectivity issues are being corrected with the new IPADS.

Mr. Natale reported that the Certificate of Transfer process will start in Zoning and the Zoning Administrator will provide the seller/owner and his agent zoning designation for the property (retail, rental, commercial laundry, etc) and the zoning district that the property is located in. This information will provide the seller/owner and agent with knowledge about how the property can be advertised and used. Codes will send the seller information about the post-settlement inspection process and other educational materials. It is expected that the seller/owner or his agent will inform the buyer about the post-settlement requirement. He noted that the current post-settlement applies only to residential properties; however, the new version applies to all properties, including commercial properties.

Mr. Corcoran inquired if the settlement company can withhold the post settlement inspection fee when the settlement occurs. Mr. Natale stated that the fee will be charged when the inspection is scheduled. He noted that the Recorder of Deeds sends property transfer information to the City daily.

Property Maintenance Monthly Report & MDJ Rulings

Mr. Natale reviewed the outcomes included in the monthly report as follows:

- Guilty – 45
- Not Guilty 17
- Dismissed - 22

Zoning Backlog

Ms. Kelleher reported that the Business Analyst and Zoning Administrator have drafted letters rejecting the zoning applications that are in the backlog. The initial letters going out are focused on properties that can be approved or rejected by the Zoning Administrator. Letters to the properties to be addressed by the Hearing Master will go out next.

Ms. Kelleher stated that she is concerned that Council hearings may begin to fall during the budget review process and she asked the Business Analyst to begin phasing them in at a rate of approximately five at a time. She noted that it is difficult to predict how many of the property owners will respond.

Housing Ordinance Update

Mr. Natale reported that the Division is getting an improved handle on illegal rentals. He also described the coordination between the various offices such as Trades and Fire.

Mr. Corcoran inquired about the random scheduling of inspections. Mr. Natale explained

that searches are computerized. The program searches for a property that requires an inspection, based on the date of the last inspection. The computer then automatically searches for other properties that require inspections that are in the vicinity of the initial property.

Yard Waste Collection

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that this topic began in the Public Works/Safety Committee, where Mr. Jones stated that the City could not collect grass clippings for compost due to the chemicals that are applied to the grass.

Ms. Kelleher stated that at Mr. Corcoran's request, she conducted a survey of approximately 75 municipalities inquiring about their yard waste collection practices. She said that 25-30 municipalities responded which makes the sample valid. She stated that the majority of the municipalities who responded collect grass clippings. She stated that although there are municipalities with drop off sites, these sites are difficult to manage and are often expensive due to the amount of illegal dumping that occurs. She expressed the belief that a better option would be the Lebanon or Laureldale approach, which is a pay to use program. Here residents who want disposal for grass clippings pay an annual fee to either have their clippings collected or to have access to a closed drop off site.

Mr. Corcoran stated that the current program does not work for all property owners. He also said that he recently purchased a mulching blade for his mower; however, the instructions recommend cutting your lawn 2-3 times per week, which is challenging for the average property owner. He agreed with the need for the City to find a better option.

Ms. Kelleher suggested that the Committee decide which option they prefer, which can be discussed with Public Works. She suggested the pay to participate option, as the majority of property owners in the City will not need grass clipping removal.

Mr. Lloyd agreed with the need to reevaluate the yard waste system. He stated the Mayor is considering a drop off location near Egleman's Park for Reading, Mt. Penn and Lower Alsace. Ms. Kelleher stated that a drop off site is problematic. She noted that Muhlenberg operated a drop off site that handles yard waste for other municipalities. She stated that two of the responding municipalities use Muhlenberg's site. She suggested exploring that as an option for Reading.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested further discussion at a Council Work Session.

Mr. Lloyd stated that he is working on a proposal for the Mayor. Mr. Corcoran asked Mr. Lloyd to be prepared to discuss this proposal at the July 16th Work Session.

Quality of Life (QoL) Program

Due to Mr. Agudo's participation on a conference call with the Mayor, Council President and Edmonton officials, the discussion was deferred to the June Work Session.

Other Matters

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for Council to consider adding ICC initiatives to committee agendas so the work is less scattered and more focused. Ms. Kelleher stated that this topic is on the June 11th Committee of the Whole agenda.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

FOLLOW UP ISSUES

1. Report on disposition of Codes Cases at MDJ Hearings
2. Request receipt of monthly Codes Report
3. Review RFPs for Delinquent BPL and other fee/tax collection
4. Update on Certificate of Transfer ordinance amendment and pilot program
5. Resolutions for KOZ (expansion and extension)
6. Resolution to fund Micro Loan Enterprise Program
7. Response to questions posed by REIA