



CITY COUNCIL

Standards of Living Committee

Monday, September 19, 2016
Meeting Report

Committee Members Attending: D. Reed, C. Daubert, S. Marmarou

Others Attending: B. Rivera, A. Palacios, T. Coleman, D. Damato, R. Johnson, D. Beane

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Mr. Daubert.

Mr. Damato introduced himself to the group as the new Property Maintenance Manager for the City.

I. Legislation Review

- **Ordinance** – restricting parking by establishing a No Parking zone on the east side of Reed Street at the intersection of Buttonwood and Reed Street for a distance of approximately 28 feet. The purpose of the restriction is to establish a safe and sufficient turning from Buttonwood Street onto that section of Reed Street.

Mr. Marmarou inquired who owns the land in question. Mr. Johnson stated that he had not had a chance to review the map to give a definitive answer.

Mr. Marmarou stated that he's concerned as the last time he recalls vehicles getting ticketed, it was unjustly done. He stated that if the land is owned by an individual, they are allowed to park their vehicles where ever they choose on their land.

Ms. Reed requested a tax map be printed out.

Mr. Marmarou stated that some of that land belongs to Railroad and some are garage owners.

Mr. Johnson stated that to his knowledge, the City has the Right of Way to the Railroad-owned property.

Mr. Johnson wanted to update Council on a situation with Met-Ed. He stated that Met-Ed is going to clear their Right-of-Ways in East Reading starting at Cotton Street and extending out to 19th Street, through Pendora Park, Mineral Spring Road, Egleman's Park, Glenn Road and parts of Hill Road. This will result in the loss of some trees and the cutting down of others. He stated that a member of his staff will work with Met-Ed to ensure minimal damage is incurred.

Mr. Johnson stating that after reviewing the tax map on the computer, along the first stretch of land coming from Buttonwood Street back up to Reed Street, there is a building on the left that is a Railroad-owned property. The next property where the building is located is resident's property.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if parking is occurring on the Railroad-owned property and who is responsible. Mr. Johnson responded that it would be the Railroad's responsibility. He stated it's only when the cars are parked in the City Right of Way that the City has jurisdiction.

II. Idling Trucks/Buses (PA Act 124 of 2008 attached pg. 7) - David Beane

Mr. Beane stated that this has been brought to the attention of the EAC at a recent meeting by some concerned residents. He stated that buses are idling on Walnut Street for extended periods of time. He stated that there is an anti-idling statute in PA that has been in effect just recently. He stated that according to that statute, buses are permitted to idle up to 15 minutes; however, residents have complained that they're idling beyond the 15 minutes; sometimes as long as two hours. The fumes have created issues for the residents in that area.

Mr. Beane stated that jurisdiction for enforcing the anti-idling ordinance rests on EPA and DEP. He stated that DEP has delegated authority to local law enforcement agencies to assist in enforcing this statute. Unfortunately, it doesn't appear to be enforced in the manner it should as there is a lack of resources available; but the law does provide that signage be available and may be utilized by owners of the space in which buses/trucks are idling. He stated that he is currently researching if the City has the authority to post the signage or if the property owner can post signage.

He stated that it is clear to him that people in the community, both those who reside and park in the community, are not aware that there is an anti-idling statute as the EPA

and DEP didn't take the time to educate the community effectively. He stated that the EAC has determined that they must devise a plan to reach out to venues, namely the Santander arena, to educate them on the requirement so that they in turn can provide that information to those who park at their venues and ask for their compliance.

Mr. Marmarou stated that this is not a problem just at these big venues such as the Santander and the Double Tree. It is also a problem in other areas and he feels that the trouble with enforcing the statute is how to document the amount of time each vehicle is idling at any one time; this can be argued.

Mr. Daubert suggested that the City can produce signage, educate the venue owners and even supply venues with the signage as a possible solution.

Mr. Beane stated that he is of the belief that the City can post the signs at these big venues at its discretion.

Ms. Reed stated that the problem becomes enforcement after the signage is in place. The City then has the obligation to enforce this and may not have the manpower or resources to ensure that the regulation is enforced. She stated that she is in agreement with contacting and educating the venues on the fact that there is a statute against idling. She asked if the EAC could reach out to those at Santander and the Double Tree to see what type of feedback they provide and then report back to the committee next month and Mr. Beane concurred that he is more than willing to assist.

III. Lease Agreement Updates - T. Coleman

Mr. Coleman stated that the majority of the list of updates are still in a pending state.

- Fire Tower

Mr. Coleman stated that the PSI Organization has a final draft and is awaiting approval of an MOU for the Fire Tower. He stated that the draft has been received and they are in the process of reviewing the inclusions regarding detailing schedules, insurance, providing certain notices when events are occurring, access to the building, etc.

- Reading Redevelopment Authority

No report. Ms. Reed expressed her concern with this issue not moving forward. She stated that she would like to see a lease agreement with the authority for the space that they use prior to the New Year. She stated that it is unfair to the other authorities who pay for space.

Mr. Johnson stated that he believes a draft exists that details who maintains and is responsible for that space entails. Ms. Reed requested that he look more closely into that and have a complete explanation to present for the next meeting.

Mr. Coleman suggested that Council contact the administration to determine how to proceed with Mr. Mukerji about the issue. Ms. Reed concurred.

- Blacktop Basketball

No report.

- County Emergency Services

Mr. Coleman stated that one of the solicitors representing the County has a copy of comments that he provided and he is currently waiting to hear back from that solicitor.

- East Ends

Mr. Coleman stated that on Wednesday, September 28, there will be a hearing with preliminary objections before Judge Rowley in which he will decide to approve or deny Ms. Dautrich's objections.

- UGI Meters

Mr. Coleman stated that as Council may already know, photos were taken of all properties with exterior meters and the analysis required in order to move forward. He stated all of this was executed and submitted to the attorneys. The next step is an interlocutory review hearing.

VI. Other Matters

- *Reinstatement of Requirement for Local Property Manager for Rental Properties*

Mr. Palacios stated that currently the ordinance is being revised by Ms. Butler to alter the language to reflect what is needed to move this forward. He stated that it was discussed to include a clause with specific time frames to which a property owner who does not have a manager overseeing rental units can utilize the City to act as manager with a daily fee to the City until the property owner can obtain an appropriate manager. This will require that each rental property always have a manager.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if there is a list of all rental properties in each district. He stated that in his district the list is extremely extensive and he has taken issue with this as the question he has is how to enforce this with the college students.

Mr. Palacios stated that he believes the idea of enacting an ordinance, similar to one provided by Council requiring colleges to disclose where students are residing may be a possible solution.

- *Bodegas and Trash Receptacles*

Mr. Daubert questioned if there was an update regarding this issue. Mr. Palacios stated that he communicated this issue with the inspectors and they visited several bodegas in the South section of the City and spoke with the owners about having trash receptacles outside their establishment; he has not yet received a report. He stated that Mr. Damato is looking to revise the manner in which their system is operating. Currently, the computer program utilized generates the appointments; however, there is no follow up part of the system in place that can show when an inspector revisited a property after issuing a citation to make certain the property owner rectified the issue.

Mr. Palacios stated that in the past the City had two inspectors performing follow up work and now the same inspector who goes out initially has to do the follow up and inspectors are arguing that they do not have enough time to complete follow ups.

Mr. Damato assured Council that this is a very important issue he is looking at correcting as the new Property Maintenance Manager as it is high on his priority list of things to do. He stated that he recalls that in the past it was helpful to have each area of the City have its own inspector so that those in that area can get to know their inspector and vice versa forming a sort of relationship with one another in order to more effectively identify and solve the issues in that specific area.

Mr. Marmarou mentioned the property on Poplar Street that places three large trash receptacles out on the sidewalk. The sidewalk on that street is already extremely narrow making it difficult for people to walk on the sidewalk at all. Mr. Palacio stated that he would follow up on that specific case.

Mr. Palacio stated that with Mr. Damato as Property Maintenance Manager he will begin to assess the issues at hand in order to determine what is needed to effectively resolve all problems Council has mentioned. He will report back and inform Council if more manpower is required or offer other possible solutions.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:40pm.

Respectfully submitted by,
Bea Rivera, Legislative Aide