

MINUTES

NEIGHBORHOOD AND PUBLIC SAFETY ISSUES COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1993

CALL TO ORDER

The Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee was called to order by Chairman Steinberg at 6:35 p.m. on the above date at Oak Park Community Center, 3425 Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, Sacramento, California.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilmembers Kerth, Ortiz, Pannell, Steinberg

1. Graffiti Abatement Efforts. (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: FOR COMMITTEE INFORMATION ONLY

Mike Hanamura, Manager of the Neighborhood Improvement Division, discussed the graffiti abatement program. Due to budget reductions, the "Graffiti Busters" program was eliminated. His division has been looking at alternatives for graffiti abatement. Those efforts involve working with neighborhood associations, business associations, and government. They surveyed other cities throughout California to see what steps they are taking to abate graffiti.

Kathy Ruff-Andonian, President of the Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association, discussed the problems of graffiti removal and the need for a more coordinated abatement program with local businesses and other neighborhood associations.

Shirley Johnson, Colonial Heights Neighborhood Association, stated they have a very active volunteer program to clean up the graffiti.

Gary Little, City Manager's Office and Neighborhood Services Department, said the City had met with the Sacramento Alliance of Neighborhoods (SCAN) and the Interfaith Service Bureau to develop a program whereby various church groups will organize youth to clean up graffiti on selected weekends. The City is also trying to be more preventative in catching youth who are graffiti taggers and making an example of them. They are also going to meet with the District Attorney to discuss setting up a program

to meet with selected businesses around the 21st-19th-F Streets Corridor as a target site for a building watch program.

Ed Astone, Franklin Boulevard Business Association, stated their association had hired painters who go out and paint out the graffiti as soon as they find it. It is a high priority for them.

Councilman Pannell, said the City should consider using anti-graffiti paint for sound walls that are going up. He would like staff to report back on the possibility of using a sealant on the sound walls in high visibility areas in the City so that the graffiti can be washed off with water. He stated that the City needs to be more pro-active in regards to being preventative. Councilman Pannell suggested having the work furlough programs work on the weekends to catch up and keep up with the graffiti removal. He added the schools should be involved - students with problems who want to work themselves back into the system could remove the graffiti.

Mr. Hanamura stated that at the Board of Supervisors meeting last week, the County Sheriff's Office and Probation Office requested a report back regarding the use of probation folks. He added there needs to be one person assigned to coordinate this; someone who can work with volunteers from neighborhood associations, businesses, and schools. Mr. Hanamura stated the California Paint Council is working with the City.

David Martinez, Deputy City Manager, talked about the possibility of having a condition placed on sound wall construction in the development process that it be graffiti resistant.

Councilwoman Ortiz stated that in the county, all new projects are required to be graffiti resistant.

Councilman Kerth asked what the City's policy is for removing graffiti from city-owned property and stop signs. He added one of the problems is that we have so many telephone numbers listed. He suggested they list a single number for graffiti removal.

Mr. Little answered that the City policy is to remove graffiti as fast as possible from City-owned property. The response time varies, but as soon as the next day if at all possible. One of the goals of the Neighborhood Services Department is to be more user friendly.

Bill Snyder, Neighborhood Awareness Group, and Hans Huber, The Neighborhood, said their main problem was with gang graffiti.

Rick DeGregorio, Stockton Boulevard Merchants and Property Owners Association, said their group paints out graffiti. They offer a \$25.00 reward for anyone leading to the arrest or identifying a perpetrator.

Councilman Steinberg said he likes the idea of getting the schools involved. He suggested the schools take this on as part of a community service project. He thinks that with peer pressure, students who have to clean up the messes that other students are making will create a dynamic that graffiti is looked down upon. He added they need somebody to take the lead in the City for coordinating this.

Information was received and filed.

2. Mixed-Use Development on Stockton Boulevard Corridor. (D5, D6)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: ORAL PRESENTATION

Barbara Wendt, Planning and Development Department, explained the study for the mixed-use development for the Stockton Boulevard Corridor. The mixed-use development concept promotes closer, safer neighborhoods for pedestrian activity and reduces auto traffic. There are a variety of ways to implement this. One is to establish a planning district with special regulations. Another way would be to modify the Zoning Ordinance to allow for a variety of mixed uses by right. The combination of mixed uses can be made up of any combination of residential, retail, and office.

Councilman Kerth expressed concern about the troubled business districts that are older, mixed-use developments. He asked what the City would be doing to see that these buildings don't end up in the same state in a few years. He stated that the vacancy rate seemed to be high. He suggested some economic analysis of this before they go much further.

Barbara Wendt said that every neighborhood and situation is different. They will be looking at current issues for things that work and will make sure the mixed-use is compatible.

Councilwoman Ortiz talked about mixed-use along Stockton Boulevard. They currently have a problem with office buildings and no residential buffer. She agrees that mixed-use is not appropriate for all areas. They need to look at them one on one. It isn't appropriate for big suburban strip malls. The conceptual plan is a mixed-use plan that will accommodate neighborhood oriented uses.

Rick DeGregorio, Stockton Boulevard Revitalization Coordinator, said the vacancy rate on Stockton Boulevard is approximately 20 to 25 percent because of the older buildings with no vacancies. They are working on the concept of commercial nodes rather than mixed-use. He thinks this would be best in terms of security, lighting, and parking.

Information was received and filed.

3. Vacant Property Ordinance Review. (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: ORAL PRESENTATION

Max Fernandez, Housing Administrator, made the presentation regarding the vacant property ordinance. This past spring, Councilwoman Ortiz asked the City Attorney to come up with an ordinance to hold property owners responsible for their property. This ordinance gives the property owner 90 days to bring property back "on line" by securing a building permit to repair the building and bring it back onto the market as a rental unit. There may be a monitoring fee of \$156 that pays for the cost of a building inspector to monitor the building. If there is ongoing trouble, the ordinance allows the City to impose a fine of \$1,000 and up to \$5,000 on each subsequent problem. The program started the middle of July, and there has been very good response from property owners. The number for the public to call if they know of a problem with a vacant building is 264-5404, the Housing and Dangerous Buildings Division. The ordinance covers commercial as well as residential buildings.

Councilwoman Ortiz stated there were brochures available that outline the various ordinances that are in place. The brochures list telephone numbers and explain how to use the ordinances.

Information was received and filed.

4. Report on the Development of a Program to Curtail Illegal Activities in Alleys. (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: FOR COMMITTEE INFORMATION ONLY

Councilwoman Ortiz stated that the problem with illegal activities in alleys is a priority item she requested be placed on the agenda tonight. She said staff would explain the current practices and identify what some options may be to remedy the problems in alleys. The options range from complete abandonment which is difficult to do, to parking barriers or gated communities with access for property owners only, to increased lighting.

Gary Little explained the only approach the City has had to address problem alleys was abandonment and in some cases that presents a hardship. Staff from the Police, Public Works, Planning, and Neighborhood Services Departments and the City Council Office have been working on the development of a program to inventory problem alleys, recommend actions to curtail illegal activities in the problem alleys, and implement approved mitigation measures. This program is being designed to address several alleys

at once. One mitigation measure would be to put additional lighting on existing poles facing alleyways; another would be to abandon the alleys.

Terry Moore, Public Works Department, explained the SMUD program for putting additional lighting on existing poles facing alleyways with the responsibility of the bill placed on the private property owners. A petition signed by the neighbors is required. The rate would be \$8.27 per month.

The councilmembers discussed the various issues of lighting and abandonment of alleyways as mitigation measures. They did not want to place a financial burden on residents. They all agreed that alleyways needed to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

John Medina, Public Works Department, stated that the Fire Department would most likely protest any alley closure. They need to be able to get their trucks on both sides of the property. It's a safety issue for them.

Councilwoman Ortiz talked about the problem alleys throughout her district. She said the Police Department is so overburdened right now, that to have them oversee initially any project is unrealistic. She asked to go on record that the Police Department comment on public safety issues, but strongly recommended that the Neighborhood Department be the overseer for this as it is a neighborhood issue.

Several members of the audience spoke in favor of closing the problem alleyways, including: Shirley Johnson, John Hernandez, Ed Astone, Steve Gibbs, Linda Whitney, a member of the Elmhurst Neighborhood Association, and a member of the Stockton Boulevard Association.

Hans Huber, The Neighborhood, suggested a program to "Adopt-an-Alley."

Arturo Venegas, Chief of Police, stated there are certain alleyways where, even though we may believe abandonment is the best way to handle it, we can't because the Police and Fire Departments must have access.

Sherry Allmon, North Sacramento Association, asked about cleaning up alleys. She also talked about placing lights in the alleys.

Councilwoman Ortiz stated that Public Works Department cleans up on an emergency basis. The California Conservation Corps has been cleaning up at our request. Solid Waste responds to dumping of tires. Beyond that they don't have a formal cleanup any longer.

Councilman Pannell asked what the costs would be.

Mr. Little stated they haven't determined the costs yet, but they were working on that.

A motion was made by Councilwoman Ortiz, and seconded by Councilman Kerth, to refer the proposed pilot program in District 5 to look at the process laid out in the staff report to begin dealing with problem alleys and to come up with estimated costs. The motion was carried with a 4-0 roll call vote.

5. City of Sacramento's Illegal Dumping Reporting Procedures. (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: FOR COMMITTEE INFORMATION ONLY

Michael Hanamura, Manager, Neighborhood Improvement Division, explained the issues related to illegal dumping in alleys and vacant lots. In January, the Public Works Department recommended they increase the reward to encourage people to report illegal dumping. To date there have been no rewards issued. The problem is that the system is still too cumbersome on how citizens can report to us. You have to call three phone numbers. If it is a act in progress, they need to call the Police Department's non-emergency number. The problem with that is they are going to the dispatcher who is also responding to 911 calls, the non-emergency calls have to wait. For those reports of dumping where they can identify the vehicle and the person, they must call the contact person in the Public Works Department. If they want the material cleaned up they must call the Neighborhood Improvement Division. They recognize the problem and will be talking to the Police Department, Solid Waste, and our own department. They will work out a smoother system that is more accessible to our citizens.

Councilman Pannell asked if the Code Enforcement Unit works out of the Neighborhood Services Department, and why couldn't they give the Code Enforcement Officer the power to cite people at the scene or they could take the license down. It makes good sense that they call Code Enforcement or Neighborhood Services directly, that if we have an officer in the area, it would be a lot easier to get them out there.

Gary Little stated one of the problems is they don't work 24 hours a day.

Councilman Pannell said that in regards to the strike force, they have somebody on-call during the evenings. If they Police dispatcher receives a call, they could page that person.

Mr. Hanamura we are looking at all the options that we can possibly do to make it easier for our citizens.

Councilwoman Ortiz stated they had hoped to be able to hand out stickers tonight with various telephone numbers. Unfortunately, they haven't been able to make this user

friendly. They will be going back to the City Council in October and come back with something that can people can take home with them, put on their refrigerator so that when dumping occurs they can call one, or two numbers at the most, and there will be somebody to answer the call.

Morris Lewis, real estate agent in Mr. Pannell's district, talked about problems at his subdivision with hazardous waste and concrete being dumped on his street. He also said he can't sell those lots because there is a dangerous light at Mack Road, Nixos, Meadowview, and Brookfield. The light was not designed to handle the traffic that is going through that intersection.

Councilman Steinberg said they would refer this to Mr. Medina to work on.

Jim Hare, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, assigned to Oak Park. He is here tonight to relate his experience as a private citizen in reporting illegal dumping. Shortly after the Council passed the \$500 reward, he was driving down 12th Avenue near Martin Luther King on a weekend morning and saw a man backing his pickup truck in the court and saw him shoving out a large cabinet onto the court. He got behind him, got license number, make, and model of his truck and had an identification of the man. He waited until Monday and called the person listed to call at the city and gave information to him. He hasn't heard anything back.

Other members of the audience gave similar examples of incidents that had been reported with no response.

David Martinez, Deputy City Manager, suggested the Neighborhood Services Department access point to be in charge of trying to resolve this.

Councilman Steinberg suggested the City hire one person in the City to be responsible for taking calls from the public and referring them to the appropriate city offices.

Mr. Little stated that is one of the items being discussed in their public response system they are working on.

Councilman Steinberg said they want staff to come back next month with some recommendations. Set up a process that works a little better when it comes to the issue of illegal dumping and how we can insure that people who goes out of their way to report these things get their just reward.

The councilmembers talked about the fees charged for dumping at the transfer station and a possible ordinance to require tire shops to keep a record of tires they remove from vehicles and dispose of.

Councilman Steinberg asked staff to bring this item back next month with a more efficient reporting process.

6. Support of a Trial Time Dollar Volunteer Program. (D6)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: ADOPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Mike McGrane, Budget Office, gave a brief overview of the volunteer program privately operated, using the "Time Dollar" concepts. This is a barter system for volunteer services. If the program receives Council endorsement, they would authorize the City to provide \$500 start-up costs and to provide space needed. The staff would report back to the Council on the success of the program. Mr. McGrane introduced Betty Brill.

Betty Brill went into more detail about the program. An example would be that a person agrees to three hours a week tutoring or whatever. Those hours are logged so that when that person needs them down the line, they can utilize them. It is neighbors helping neighbors, and they keep it in the neighborhoods. They go to the schools and get a list of volunteer needs that the school has. They also checked with Social Services and they will send names of people who need assistance. It's tailored to each person. Time is logged into the computer to be used when they need it. If they don't use it, then it goes into a general fund for somebody who doesn't have hours.

A motion was made by Councilman Pannell, seconded by Councilwoman Ortiz, to forward this item to the full City Council. The motion was carried unanimously.

7. Adoption of the Mission Statement and Goals for the Neighborhood and Public Safety Issues Committee of the City Council. (D-All)

RECOMMENDATION OF STAFF: ADOPT STAFF RECOMMENDATION


A motion was made by Councilman Pannell, seconded by Councilman Kerth, to continue this item to the October 7, 1993, committee meeting. The motion was carried unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT - There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 9:08 p.m.

Submitted:


Jan Mirrione, Secretary

Approved:


Darrell Steinberg, Chairperson