

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

November 20, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Councilman Denny Whayne Conference Room (Bush Building, 4th floor)
840 Boonville Avenue

MEMBERS

PRESENT: Heather Hardinger, Chair; Derek Lee; Craig Hosmer; and Callie Carroll.

MEMBERS

ABSENT: None.

COUNCIL

PRESENT: Councilmember Horton.

STAFF

PRESENT: Jason Gage, City Manager; Collin Quigley, Deputy City Manager; Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager; Steve Childers, Director of Planning and Development; Corey Stinson, Associate Planner; Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services; Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services; Dan Smith, Director of Public Works; Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Duke McDonald; Assistant City Attorney; Anita Cotter, City Clerk; and Kristina D'Andrea, City Clerk Administrative Specialist.

GUESTS: Isabelle J. Walker, Blighted Property Work Group; Alice Barber, Springfield Tenants Unite; Kim Painter, Springfield Tenants Unite; Becky Volz, Neighborhood Advisory Council; Brent Haselhorst, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Brent Brown, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Megan Creson, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Marta Mieke, *Springfield News-Leader*; and Jack McGee, *Springfield Daily Citizen*.

Councilmember Heather Hardinger, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 12:01 p.m., and roll call was conducted. Present: Derek Lee, Callie Carroll, Craig Hosmer, and Heather Hardinger. Absent: None.

Councilmember Hosmer moved to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2024, meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lee and approved by the following vote: Ayes: Carroll, Hosmer, Hosmer, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Jason Gage, City Manager, introduced Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement, to discuss the first topic, which was a status update on roadway information signs regarding information for providing donations to those in need.

Ms. Scott discussed the “Help Without the Hazard Campaign” as a focus on educating people about the importance of safer giving methods as alternatives to interacting with panhandlers on the street. She referred to the handout presented at the meeting, Top 10 Ideas for Educating on Safe Giving Methods. This listed communication approaches for education on safety hazards associated with giving to panhandlers at large intersections, highlighting how donations to organizations could be more effective and impactful, and showcasing trusted local organizations. She noted MoDOT did not support signage at major intersections; however, digital message signs and the possibility of posting on private properties had been discussed.

Councilmember Carroll asked if the campaign would primarily be on social media. Ms. Scott responded affirmatively and expressed her opinion media partners would be on board.

Mr. Gage asked if billboards were an option for more graphics. Ms. Scott responded affirmatively.

Councilmember Hardinger asked if there would be a timeline for additional information. Ms. Scott responded an update could be provided at the next meeting. Mr. Gage asked if the campaign could be started in the first quarter of 2025. Ms. Scott answered affirmatively.

Councilmember Carroll noted this had morphed into something different from the initial plan; however, it was a step in the right direction. She expressed concern social media may not resonate with elderly people. Ms. Scott suggested television advertisements as another means for education.

Mr. Gage introduce Steve Childers, Director of Planning and Development, who was present to answer questions related to the Council Housing Priority and the status of preapproved plans.

Mr. Gage reminded the Committee they made a motion at the last meeting to focus on Councilmember Horton’s objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4, which was passed. He noted the consideration to create preapproved plans was not one of the objectives in the motion. Councilmember Hosmer discussed how the preapproved plans could facilitate the building process. Mr. Gage recommended the Committee make a motion to add the consideration of preapproved plans to the discussion.

Councilmember Lee moved to add to the discussion the consideration to create preapproved, neighborhood compatible home designs to expedite private infill housing project permitting, reduce construction cost, and complement existing municipal housing programs.

Councilmember Carroll seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, Carroll, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

Mr. Childers discussed the goals for neighborhood rehabilitation in specific areas of Springfield. These included the vacant lot program and assuring new construction for single-family homes or duplexes fit the character of the street and neighborhood.

Councilmember Hosmer discussed the need for a variety of preapproved plans to ensure the architectural design for houses or duplexes fit the character of the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Childers responded his staff was working on multiple preapproved plans to fit the character of various neighborhoods throughout the city.

Mr. Childers noted the City owned a few vacant lots and was in the process of obtaining ownership of other chronic nuisance properties. He discussed the difference between preapproved plans, which were architectural plans for single-family homes or duplexes, and pre-vetted lots, which focused on the suitability of infrastructure and parking to support a multi-unit dwelling designed to appear like a single-family home.

Mr. Gage discussed the vetting of preapproved plans as a housing priority. He recommended the Committee either vote at this meeting to include the vetting of preapproved plans as part of the housing priority or postpone the vote until the Committee decided what the remainder of the housing priorities would be, and full housing priority recommendations could be submitted together to full City Council. Councilmember Hosmer asked if the vetting of preapproved plans could be voted on and submitted to full City Council as a separate recommendation from the rest of the housing priorities. Mr. Gage answered affirmatively and advised the Committee had a choice to recommend each housing priority separately or together to full City Council, and the timeline needed to be considered.

Councilmember Lee commented on the preapproved plans mentioned by Bob Jones, Grants Administrator, in his last presentation, and asked if the Committee could view those plans. Mr. Childers advised these preapproved plans were set aside for HUD funding, and the architectural designs needed to be modified to fit the character of the neighborhoods.

Councilmember Hardinger asked if the preapproved plans could be separated into packages to recommend to full City Council. Mr. Gage responded affirmatively and noted the Committee would need to decide how they were going to submit the recommendations.

Councilmember Lee advised a recent order of home plans had cost \$1,200.00 for a 2,500 square foot home, plus an additional \$500.00 for any modifications. He noted there was an approval process which could take approximately two months. He expressed support of the preapproved plans.

Councilmember Hosmer discussed rehabilitation of neighborhoods and surplus property. Collin Quigley, Deputy City Manager, discussed a proposal for surplus lots which will be submitted to City Council in the first quarter of next year. This proposal included the conveyance of these surplus lots to affordable housing organizations at no cost as long as the City's preapproved plans were used for the construction of single-family homes on these lots.

Councilmember Lee moved to add the preapproved plan item as a new Council housing priority at the next City Council meeting. Councilmember Hosmer seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, Carroll, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

The next item on the agenda was a presentation on recommendations for the rental inspection program by Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services.

Mr. Gugel discussed the inspection focus for residential single family or duplex rental property within the city. A City inspector would perform a visual inspection triggered at occupancy change with at least one inspection per unit every five years, and complaint-based inspections would still be performed, per City ordinance. The inspection would be limited to observations readily visible without moving or removing items.

Mr. Gage clarified this would not include multiplexes with three or more units. Councilmember Hardinger noted the concept of scalability would apply as this was a starting point which could eventually expand the inspection program. Mr. Gugel noted this provided an opportunity to work through unforeseen problems. Mr. Gage discussed the benefits of inspections during the change in occupancy and inspecting a vacant property.

Councilmember Lee discussed how scheduling could be a challenge and result in loss of rent income for property owners as they await the inspection before allowing a new tenant to move in. Mr. Gage also noted the gap time to repair any items found by the inspector to allow occupancy.

Councilmember Hosmer inquired about the inspection frequency for long-term tenants. Mr. Gage responded by discussing two different approaches. One, the inspection would be based solely on occupancy and would not occur until the unit became vacant, unless a complaint by the tenant was received. Two, units approaching the five-year limit would need to be inspected while the tenant resided in the home. Councilmember Hosmer discussed the benefits of routine inspections. He expressed his opinion the inspections would encourage landlords to maintain their properties.

Mr. Gugel discussed exemption from inspections for both new construction and major renovations.

Mr. Gugel discussed the frequency of inspections, triggers, and fines for any violations. He provided a list of items which would be deemed as violations, and the property owner would have the mandatory duty to repair or abate within thirty days of completion of the inspection report. Mr. Gage noted most of these items would be inspected upon obtaining permission to enter the housing unit. He further noted there may be other items not on the list the inspector may find which would require repairs.

Mr. Gugel discussed repair timelines, fee structure for inspections, estimated cost of resources and staffing, and a five-year revenue versus cost analysis.

Councilmember Carroll inquired about a pilot neighborhood to resolve any unforeseen issues. Mr. Gage discussed concerns regarding the use of a pilot neighborhood and the potential change in regulations could be perceived as inequity in regulating neighborhoods. Councilmember Lee recommended targeting older homes most likely to have violations. He asked Mr. Gugel if he had discussed costs of resources for fee collections with David Holtmann, Director of Finance. Mr. Gugel responded he had not. Councilmember Lee asked Mr. Gugel to discuss these costs and present the information at the next Committee meeting. Mr. Gugel responded affirmatively. Councilmember Carroll asked about the legal ramifications for using a pilot neighborhood. Jordan Paul, City Attorney, responded a standardized reviewed would have to be on a rational basis as long as a protective class, such as race, was not affected. The underlined basis of data would need to be specific.

Councilmember Hosmer inquired about the number of complaint-based inspections. Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services, responded there were approximately 4,500 inspections per year for single-family residential units and duplexes. Councilmember Hosmer commented on the prevalent fire hazards in vacant homes and asked if the City was reimbursed for these inspections and fire services when there had been a fire at a vacant unit. Mr. Gugel answered the City did not receive reimbursement. If the City found demolition was necessary for a dwelling, then the City would seek compensation for the costs of the demolition.

Councilmember Hosmer asked about utilizing a fleet of electric vehicles for City inspectors to save on fuel costs for the City. Mr. Gugel pointed out costs and the need to install charging stations.

Mr. Gugel discussed some additional information and considerations. He anticipated a timeline for the startup of the rental inspection program to begin in approximately November 2025 with approval by City Council. This timeline included hiring additional staff for inspectors and acquiring additional vehicles, which would need to be included in the budget request.

Councilmember Carroll expressed her interest in an equitable pilot neighborhood. Councilmember Hardinger expressed the same interest and advised she would like to hear opinions from additional stakeholders regarding the feasibility of an equitable pilot neighborhood. Mr. Gage expressed his opinion an equitable pilot neighborhood would be difficult to implement.

Mr. Gage advised the Committee to discuss the inspection items and have a consensus at the next Committee meeting. Councilmember Hardinger noted she would like to hear feedback from staff and stakeholder groups involved in the research for the rental inspection program. Mr. Gage advised the PowerPoint presentation would be provided to those groups to obtain feedback for the next Committee meeting.

Councilmember Lee moved to adjourn. Councilmember Carroll seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, Carroll, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain: None.

The meeting adjourned at 1:19 p.m.

Prepared by Kristina D'Andrea