

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

April 17, 2024

12:00 p.m.

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

MEMBERS

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

MEMBERS

ABSENT: Callie Carroll.

COUNCIL

PRESENT: Councilmember Monica Horton.

STAFF

PRESENT: Jason Gage, City Manager; Collin Quigley, Deputy City Manager; Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager; Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Anita Cotter, City Clerk; and Julie Greer, Deputy City Clerk.

GUESTS: Isabelle Walker, Blighted Property Work Group; Alice Barber, Springfield Tenants Unite; Brendan Griesemer, Restore SGF; H. Wes Pratt, Minorities in Business; Katie Anderson, Springfield Housing Authority; Rebecca Pashia, Springfield Housing Authority; Sarah Barnts, Springfield Tenants Unite; and Carol Hutchens, citizen.

Councilmember Heather Hardinger, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 12:01 p.m., and roll call was conducted. Present: Derek Lee, Craig Hosmer, and Heather Hardinger. Absent: Callie Carroll.

Councilmember Hosmer moved to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2024, meeting as presented. Councilmember Lee seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: Carroll. Abstain: None.

Councilmember Hardinger noted the next item on the agenda was consideration of a new Housing Priority. She asked Jason Gage, City Manager, to provide an overview and noted Councilmember Monica Horton was in attendance and could provide additional information.

Mr. Gage explained the Committee of the Whole had been tasked with developing a Housing Priority so it could be added to the City Council Priorities document at some point. More recently, this topic had been referred to the Community Involvement Committee. He reported some work had already been completed by Councilmember Horton and explained he anticipated the Committee making a recommendation to the Committee of the Whole with the possibility of

related action items being presented to the full City Council. Councilmember Hardinger asked Councilmember Horton to present.

Councilmember Horton explained she wanted to provide the Committee members the results of the exercise conducted by City Council on January 30 regarding the three prompts. She noted the prompts were: A Housing Priority must have (blank); A Housing Priority must have (blank) in the description; and A Housing Priority must have (blank) as an objective.

She noted at the meeting in January, Mr. Gage had asked City staff to bring in some objectives under the other priorities, including Quality of Place and Economic Vitality. She explained she was not sure to what extent that language would be merged along with the feedback given by Councilmembers at the meeting on January 30. She explained staff members tallied up the Post-It notes from the January 30 exercise and noted that information had been provided to the Committee members.

Councilmember Horton noted the Committee members had been provided with a revised Housing Priority description which factored in Mayor Pro Tem Simpson's feedback regarding the addition of access and quality to the language. The revised description read as follows: "A dedication to increasing access to quality housing options by promoting homeownership, improving rental housing conditions through code enforcement, while also supporting emergency housing needs, and expanding property reinvestment incentives to help meet the demands of a growing and diverse community."

Councilmember Horton expressed her hope the Committee would be in favor of establishing a Housing Priority and would send a proposal to the Committee of the Whole. She noted she did not have the expectation that every objective she had proposed in January would be fully explored by the Committee before a recommendation was sent to the Committee of the Whole. She explained her idea was that a general description could be developed by the Committee members, and other objectives could be referred back to this Committee for consideration. She expressed her appreciation for being allowed to present to the Committee.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if the revised description language was being proposed as a priority. Councilmember Horton responded affirmatively. Councilmember Hosmer agreed the topic was important, but noted adding it as a priority did not necessarily mean any action would be taken. He expressed his support for creating a stand-alone priority regarding housing and noted other areas of concern, such poverty, neighborhoods, economic development, and law enforcement, would be affected by a good housing policy.

Councilmember Hardinger noted there were housing elements in several of the other priorities City Council had already established. She expressed her opinion there was a benefit to having housing as a stand-alone priority because it would be top of mind as City Council considered where to invest funding and staff time. She expressed her opinion housing was such a broad topic, it was a natural next step to have it under its own umbrella.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if the thought was that it would then go back to the Community Involvement Committee to determine implementation steps regarding a Housing Priority.

Councilmember Hardinger responded affirmatively, noting the Committee could evaluate and prioritize funding. She expressed her opinion it would also help City staff prioritize activities. She noted there were recommendations as required by Resolution 10722 which could provide guidance.

Councilmember Lee noted he would be in favor of separating housing and making it a stand-alone priority, but he expressed his agreement with Councilmember Hosmer that just having something as a priority did not ensure action would be taken. He noted he did not see any clear mandate; he referenced the dot exercise conducted in January and noted out of nine people, the item that got the most votes only received three votes. He reiterated he did not have a concern regarding the language or the priority, and he noted it would be a different conversation if the goal were to make a change.

Councilmember Hardinger responded housing was a diverse topic, and the results of the exercise proved that. She noted there were many different aspects of housing that needed to be addressed in the city. She expressed her opinion housing was an issue that could be overwhelming and setting it out as a stand-alone priority would help make sure areas deemed most important would not be lost. She expressed her opinion the Committee had been proactive in gleaning information from different community groups and had an opportunity to make a significant impact on some of these items. She expressed her opinion there was political will on City Council to do the work.

Councilmember Hardinger asked Mr. Gage what the next steps would be with the item. She also asked him if the Committee could make a recommendation to City Council to consider this as a priority. Mr. Gage responded he took the delegation of the topic to the Committee to not only decide if there should be a Housing Priority, he also considered the charge to the Committee to be to fill in the priority and make a recommendation on the whole piece to City Council, including objectives or tasks.

Councilmember Hardinger noted there were objectives listed on the quality housing handout and asked how the objectives would align with some of the research already completed by City staff members regarding housing in general. Mr. Gage responded the Planning Department staff members could research and provide information. He noted generally cities had varied approaches to housing, although each city would probably consider housing to be a priority.

Councilmember Hardinger noted there were some items in the recommendations from the Nuisance Property Resolution which should be considered as a part of some of the objectives, similar to an action item list or a task list. She noted the Committee members had an idea of the potential cost on some of those items and the amount of time it could take to implement them. She noted there were some objectives listed which could be a little different.

Mr. Gage responded it was a good style, as it included an objective and had tasks listed. He reviewed the style of the current Council Priorities, with broad-based priorities and a combination of associated objectives and tasks. He explained he had asked the Department Directors to each develop a strategic plan with tasks, goals, and key performance indicators. Each of the departmental strategic plans should appropriately incorporate the City Council Priorities. He suggested reviewing the City Council Priorities to determine which tasks could be accomplished

this year; he suggested an interim session with the Committee members for this discussion and noted this would fit into that.

Councilmember Hardinger suggested being more specific and more intentional would help City Council since this was such a broad issue. She also suggested mapping out possibilities and determining which assets and infrastructure were already in place and working well. She also recommended pulling in community partners, noting there could be multiple stakeholders which would be interested in partnerships.

Mr. Gage noted the challenge would be making sure actions taken were within the role of government, determining which needs were greatest, where it would be possible to have the greatest impact, and what the cost would be.

Councilmember Hosmer suggested the Committee go ahead and put the description forward to the City Council as a Council Priority, noting details could be worked out later. He expressed his opinion making the recommendation would mean it was now a priority for City Council and City Council was looking at ways to make housing better in the city of Springfield for everyone.

Mr. Gage noted the current City Council Priority titles were relatively brief, with a description and then objectives listed. He suggested the title could be “Increase access to quality housing options.” The rest of the statement could be used to provide an additional description.

Councilmember Hardinger noted City Council set priorities every year. Mr. Gage suggested reviewing the priorities in the interim to determine which ones should be accelerated.

Councilmember Hardinger expressed her opinion a lot of relevant information had been collected, especially action items resulting from Resolution 10722 which were already in progress. She expressed her opinion the Housing Priority made sense and would allow City Council to communicate the role community partners play in the larger conversation around housing because it was something that could not be tackled by the City alone.

Councilmember Lee noted the Committee members appeared to agree with the language. He recommended moving it forward to City Council.

Councilmember Hardinger expressed her agreement on the language and expressed her opinion drafting this with language that could be presented to City Council made sense. She noted the Committee could start with the recommendation and then consider the different topics and develop action items. She noted some items may be referred to the Community Involvement Committee, and some may be assigned to other committees.

Mr. Gage suggested the Committee members evaluate how much time they wanted to spend on developing tasks. He reviewed options for approaches on presenting the priority to City Council. He explained the Committee could recommend housing as an added priority, or they could spend more time on the objectives and tasks listed under this priority and provide a complete package to City Council for review.

Councilmember Hardinger responded providing the priority to City Council made sense to her. She asked if the other priorities required additional information or if they were just a general statement, and she asked if the City Manager would explain the context behind that as the recommendation was being presented in the future. Mr. Gage responded affirmatively.

Councilmember Hardinger asked for clarification if a vote of the Committee was required. Mr. Gage responded the next step would be to take the recommendation to the Committee of the Whole, and then provide their recommendations to City Council; he noted he would double check. He explained a motion could cover both. He asked the Committee to finalize the language on the priority before making a motion to recommend it. He explained the Committee could work through the language during the meeting, or he could bring a title and description formatted for their consideration at the next meeting.

Councilmember Lee noted he was supportive of the language as it had been presented. Councilmember Hosmer asked if the Committee could vote to allow the City staff members to go ahead and modify the format and language of this priority so it was consistent with the existing priorities. Mr. Gage responded affirmatively, noting the motion could also include the recommendation to the Committee of the Whole and all of City Council. Councilmember Hosmer asked if it was necessary to provide this recommendation to the Committee of the Whole or if it could be forwarded to the entire City Council. Mr. Gage responded he would check.

Councilmember Hosmer moved to refer the language provided in the revised description of the Housing Priority to City Council for adoption. Councilmember Lee seconded the motion, and it was approved by the following vote: Ayes: Lee, Hosmer, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: Carroll. Abstain: None.

Councilmember Hardinger noted the motion had passed, and the priority would be sent to City Council for discussion. Mr. Gage responded he did not believe the Committee would need any additional authorization from City Council to continue addressing additional points of this topic.

Councilmember Hardinger asked for clarification regarding the next steps as the Committee continued to work through the priority items in the tasks associated with the topic of housing. She noted through the resolution development, they had started a list of tasks and recommendations associated with the resolution, but there were some additional items listed in the quality housing description that may need to be added. She asked if City staff could work on creating a priority list based on citizen input and data already collected or received so the Committee members could consider the items as they start to work through this topic. Mr. Gage recommended starting with what the Committee had already outlined. He also suggested comparing the recommendations to the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Hardinger noted it would also be helpful to have information regarding what has already been accomplished. This information would assist the Committee when determining new projects, prioritizing, and deciding the best way to implement them.

Mr. Gage asked if it would be helpful to have information from Councilwoman Horton, pages from the Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan, and an overview of what housing programs were

already in place available for the next meeting. Councilwoman Hardinger responded affirmatively.

Councilman Lee noted he would prefer for the Committee members approach the objectives by considering each item individually in order to make recommendations.

Mr. Gage noted the previous motion was to have staff to take the language and create the priority title and a general narrative to be presented to City Council. He asked for clarification on whether Councilman Lee wanted to provide detail as part of that package or if that would be done afterwards. Councilman Lee expressed his opinion they would be separate; everyone had agreed on the priority, and the next steps should be considering implementation measures. He expressed his opinion the Committee should start with objective one regarding a rental property inspection program and landlord leasing and develop specific language pertaining to accomplishing this objective.

Mr. Gage responded staff would still gather the information he had mentioned previously so the Committee members would have that for reference, and key staff members would be available for questions at the next meeting. Councilwoman Hardinger asked for the information to be provided for review via e-mail prior to the next meeting.

Councilman Hosmer noted he would like to explore what impediments were stopping infill and what incentives could be put into place to encourage infill. He expressed his opinion that was still a huge problem in parts of the city where there were multiple empty lots. He noted there should be a mechanism to make it easier for a builder to accomplish this or a way to incentivize infill projects. He expressed his opinion that infill would help the neighborhood, help with crime prevention, and assist with economic development. He noted the Committee should look at what incentives could be offered or what impediments could be removed to encourage infill.

Councilwoman Hardinger asked if he was talking about something different than what was listed in objective 3C (tax abatement). Councilman Hosmer responded tax abatement would not provide a single-family home for home ownership. He recommended having pre-approved building plans for homes, similar to stock plans.

Councilwoman Horton expressed her opinion this sounded like incentive zoning, and that was included in objective C. She clarified it was different than property tax abatement, and it was called incentive zoning. She noted this included different levels of income and builders who were incentivized to build below market rate housing based on 60 to 80 percent AMI, 60 to 40 percent of AMI, and 40 percent and below of AMI. She noted it was a topic she was interested in and was being utilized in other cities.

Councilman Lee noted under current Code, it typically took nine months to subdivide property with requirements to provide public improvements, which disincentivizes subdividing property resulting in disincentivizing building homes. He noted the Plans and Policies Committee had reviewed this, and he had provided language which could provide a solution. He noted this was not the same as incentive zoning but offered potential tools to make it easier to build a house. It

could eliminate the stop gaps in the current Code. Mr. Gage responded a large lot could be divided into multiple building lots.

Councilman Hosmer expressed his opinion the community needed single family homes but had an abundance of empty lots which ultimately cost more to maintain. If houses could be built on those lots, the tax base would be increased, and neighborhoods would benefit. He noted impediments could be removed, and incentives could be put into place to fill those gaps.

Mr. Gage noted one of the Housing Priority objectives would be related to this policy and how to financially incentivize infill. Councilwoman Hardinger asked if an existing action item was associated with this policy. Mr. Gage responded this topic could be added for consideration at the next meeting.

Councilman Hosmer expressed his opinion it appeared the City was afraid to try something new because it might not work. He expressed his opinion the City Council members were not doing their jobs if they were not trying to make improvements.

Councilwoman Hardinger noted many different types of plans were already in use, and this was discussed at the Vacant Property Leadership Institute; some had been successful, and some had not. She noted the Committee could learn from studies and noted the Drew Lewis Foundation had already started a housing project which would be a good to review. She expressed her opinion making land available would help create new housing stock.

Mr. Gage noted there were multiple organizations in the city which deal with housing. He provided the Land Trust as one example. He suggested the Committee members may want to review an inventory of the community organizations which were associated with housing and what niche they were in. Councilwoman Hardinger responded she did plan to meet with community organizations.

Councilman Lee asked if it would be possible for the Committee members to pick a couple of the objectives and focus on them at the next meeting. Councilwoman Hardinger responded seeing a general road map of the different projects which have been implemented could be helpful, and she agreed it might be a good idea to review these suggestions objective by objective. She suggested the Committee start with objective 1a at the next meeting noting it addressed rental inspection and landlord licensing.

Councilwoman Hardinger expressed her opinion the research for the rental inspection program would be extensive. She requested staff provide information on what a rental inspection program would encompass and what landlord licensing could look like. Councilman Lee responded it was his understanding that Brock Rowe, Director of Building Development Services, had done some research on these topics. Councilwoman Hardinger noted some of that information had been sent to the Committee previously. Councilman Lee asked for the material to be resent.

Councilmember Hardinger noted Councilmember Lee had expressed a desire to address an issue. Councilmember Lee noted the City had provided a Top 20 list of nuisance property owners, and it had been brought to Councilmember Lee's attention there were some unintended consequences

related to the publishing of the list. He had spoken with a Mr. Reed who was not the same individual as the Mr. Reed on the Top 20 list. He relayed that Mr. Reed had to hire an attorney to try to disassociate from the Mr. Reed on the list. He noted this issue resulted from the list created and posted by the City. He expressed his opinion a large majority of the property owners were doing a good job, and only a very small amount of property owners were not. He noted it appeared the good property owners were being negatively impacted by the list. He noted Councilmember Carroll had previously suggested lowering the number of property owners listed from 20 to 10. Councilmember Lee recommended either eliminating the list or making it smaller if it really was necessary so it would affect a smaller number of people.

Councilmember Hardinger explained the new software would help show the status of the properties so it would not be a list of names, but a list of properties which were in the abatement process.

Mr. Gage responded compilation and publication of the Top 20 list was the only ongoing task which stemmed from Resolution 10722. He recalled the Resolution required an updated list to be published every 90 days unless changed by City Council. He noted Building Development Services was working on ordinance changes dealing with chronic nuisances which would go before City Council soon. The way the list drew information would be different than how chronic nuisances would be dealt with if City Council approved the Committee recommendations. He noted there were other purposes for the list, and the City Council would have to determine if they wanted to discontinue the list. One of the challenges encountered was it was difficult to determine who had been a long-term owner of a property and responsible for its poor condition versus who had just purchased the property with the intent to make repairs. City Council would have to amend the resolution to officially discontinue the list.

Councilmember Hardinger noted there was a difference between the published list and the information City staff members needed to administratively follow the process.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if Resolution 10722 required a list of the Top 20 or the Top 10. Councilmember Lee responded the requirement was to list the Top 20 and noted half of the top 20 was less than five.

Councilmember Hosmer responded maybe the list should be the Top 10. Mr. Gage noted that was an option, although it could still include someone who purchased multiple properties right before the list was published who actually intended to fix up the properties. Councilmember Hosmer noted the list was not a reflection of what was actually occurring.

Councilmember Hardinger asked what the list was helping accomplish, noting there were already punitive measures in place for those who were going through the process appropriately. She asked if there was a need for a list to be compiled and distributed. She noted if the goal was to get the properties into compliance, she was not sure the list would be an incentive for bad actors.

Mr. Gage noted the Community Involvement Committee had been charged with that issue, so the Committee could make a recommendation to City Council regarding the list at any time.

Councilmember Lee moved to reduce the list from 20 to 10. Jordan Paul, City Attorney, explained that topic had not been listed on the posted agenda, so it could not be acted on at the meeting. Mr. Gage noted it could be listed on the agenda for the next meeting. Councilmember Hardinger explained it could be discussed and voted on at the next meeting.

Councilmember Lee noted he would be in favor of doing away with the list all together. Councilmember Hardinger responded she would consider this option.

Mr. Gage noted the topic would be listed on the next meeting agenda so the Committee members could have an opportunity to discuss the required list and perhaps take advisory action.

Councilmember Horton noted she and Councilmember Brandon Jenson would be in agreement with a Top 10 list; she advised she was aware of a persistent bad actor in Springfield and noted it would probably rise to the surface if the number were reduced to 10. Councilmember Hardinger responded this could be a discussion topic at the next meeting.

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

The meeting adjourned at 1:01 p.m.

Prepared by Julie Greer