

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

October 16, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Councilman Denny Wayne 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: None.

STAFF

PRESENT: Jason Gage, City Manager; Collin Quigley, Deputy City Manager; Maurice S. Jones, Deputy City Manager; Steve Childers, Director of Planning and Development; Bob Atchley, Senior City Planner; Bob Jones, Grants Administrator; Martin Gugel, Director of Building Development Services; Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services; Dan Smith, Director of Public Works; Brett Foster, Traffic Engineer; Cora Scott, Director of Public Information and Civic Engagement; David Holtmann, Director of Finance; Ben Calia, Purchasing Agent; Jordan Paul, City Attorney; Duke McDonald; Assistant City Attorney; Anita Cotter, City Clerk; and Kristina D'Andrea, City Clerk Administrative Specialist.

GUESTS: Brandon Griesemer, Restore SGF; Isabelle J. Walker, Blighted Property Work Group; Alice Barber, Springfield Tenants Unite; Kim Painter, Springfield Tenants Unite; Rob Ybanez, Springfield Tenants Unite; Nancy Williams; Habitat for Humanity; Becky Volz, Neighborhood Advisory Council; Brent Brown, Springfield Apartment and Housing Association; Hope Davis, *Springfield News-Leader*; and Alyssa Roney, *Springfield Daily Citizen*.

*Arrived at 12:10 p.m.

** Left at 1:05 p.m.

Councilmember Heather Hardinger, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 12:02 p.m., and roll call was conducted. Present: Derek Lee, Callie Carroll, and Heather Hardinger. Absent: Craig Hosmer.

Councilmember Carroll moved to approve the minutes of the August 29, 2024, meeting as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Lee and approved by the following vote: Ayes: Carroll, Hosmer, and Hardinger. Nays: None. Absent: Hosmer. Abstain: None.

Dan Smith, Director of Public Works, presented a PowerPoint on sign installations at major intersections which experienced panhandling issues. He presented a proposed static sign, "It's

Okay to Say No to Panhandlers; Give to Local Charities,” and provided a brief overview of meetings with the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) as most of the major intersections in the city fall under MoDOT’s jurisdiction. He highlighted some of MoDOT’s concerns for safety and liabilities and whether this sign complied with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a regulatory guide for signing on public roads in the United States. He further explained the MUTCD’s purpose for national standards for traffic control signs.

Mr. Smith described the City’s consideration for these signs, which included advisory sign colors, placement, and size, and cost of installation at \$400.00 per sign.

Mr. Smith described alternative messaging options and recommended Dynamic Message Signs (DMS) for a pilot program as a short-term campaign and collaborating with businesses to place signs on private property. He also recommended continued discussions with MoDOT to explore compliant solutions.

Councilmember Carroll expressed support for the panhandling sign and suggested public education on non-profit organizations that focus on helping the underprivileged to encourage contributions to these organizations as an alternative to providing money to panhandlers. She also agreed with the short-term campaign using DMS.

Councilmember Lee asked about concerns for displaying the static panhandling signs. Mr. Smith responded with an explanation of concerns for sign clutter at intersections and being a contributing factor for traffic accidents. He discussed how DMS could be a more effective approach. Brett Foster, Traffic Engineer, further expounded on the concerns which included the small size of the static sign creating a distraction for drivers.

Mr. Gage asked for more discussion on facing the static sign parallel to the road for motorists to read when stopped at a traffic light. Mr. Foster responded by expressing concern for vandalism and theft of these signs.

Councilmember Hardinger inquired about a community campaign prior to sign installation to gauge public response. Councilmember Carroll expressed concern for not doing anything and suggested using DMS.

Councilmember Hosmer asked how many DMS the City had. Mr. Foster responded the City had over twenty. Councilmember Hosmer suggested the panhandling message be incorporated in the “drive safe” messaging throughout the City, as well as public education and as an insert with the utility bills from City Utilities. He noted the traffic hazards caused by motorists stopping for panhandlers, and expressed his opinion a safer option would be to donate to non-profit organizations designed to help the underprivileged.

Councilmember Carroll discussed public education regarding resources for the underprivileged to obtain assistance. Cora Scott, Director of Public Involvement and Civic Engagement, responded by describing how some non-profit organizations had contacted panhandlers and encouraged them to accept the resources available to them.

Mr. Gage noted alternative options for public education, such as social media and radio. Ms. Scott responded a multi-media campaign could be accomplished.

Mr. Gage asked if MoDOT would allow DMS on their corridors. Mr. Smith responded he would ask MoDOT if they would allow temporarily placed DMS on their corridors. Mr. Foster responded the new MUTCD had set new regulations for messages on DMS be strictly related to traffic control as of July 2024. Councilmember Hosmer asked for verification if the panhandling message could be placed on the City's DMS. Mr. Smith responded they may be able to but would have to check with the MUTCD.

Councilmember Carroll and Ms. Scott discussed the dangers of helping panhandlers and how donating to non-profit organizations would be a better option.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if City Council action was needed. Mr. Gage responded the Committee should decide on which messaging option was preferred.

Councilmember Hardinger expressed support for an alternative messaging as a pilot campaign. Councilmember Carroll suggested the addition of variable messaging. Mr. Gage noted the DMS option was easily accessible. Ms. Scott recommended a campaign timed out in sequence, with a timeline for the education campaign to start by the end of 2024. The members of the Committee expressed agreement.

The next topic was the housing priorities, and Bob Jones, Grants Administrator, presented a PowerPoint on quality housing options.

Mr. Jones provided a brief overview of the presentation. He noted the new quality housing options priority was based on three sources which would also expand the program beyond the limits of the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grants. These included the Forward SGF Comprehensive Plan, the SGF Housing Study, and Councilmember Horton's quality housing objectives presented on January 23, 2024.

Mr. Jones noted the four goals of the Forward SGF Neighborhoods and Housing chapter. These included creating complete neighborhoods, diversity in housing choices, revitalizing neighborhoods, and cultivating neighborhood identity. He further noted there were sixteen ideas to help facilitate these goals which were listed on the handout he provided.

Mr. Jones noted stabilization and improvement for both neighborhoods and housing were the strategies set forth in the SGF Housing Study, and there were 58 recommendations within the framework of these strategies, some of which were related to homeownership and affordable rentals.

Mr. Jones discussed Councilmember Horton's four objectives and ten recommendations. The objectives included improving existing housing stock, establishing an affordable housing trust fund, adopting the Land Use Codes, and supporting access to rental housing. He noted the recommendations emphasized the need to include a focus on the existing housing stock, expressed the need to seek additional revenue sources with more flexibility than HUD funding

allowed, supported the ongoing code re-write process currently underway, and targeted specific issues affecting tenants and landlords. He further noted the expansion of funding beyond the annual HUD grants would be required due to the range of housing needs.

Mr. Jones listed other considerations, and these were provided in a handout for the meeting.

Councilmember Lee referred to the consideration to create pre-approved, neighborhood compatible home designs to reduce construction costs and complement existing municipal housing programs. He noted the City required full engineering plans for quads and triplexes, while many municipalities did not have this requirement and allowed inspections by single-family residential home inspectors instead. He noted this would be more cost-effective than hiring specialized engineers. He asked this be considered as a specific point to reduce construction costs.

Councilmember Hardinger asked what the next steps for the Committee would be and directed her question to Mr. Gage. Mr. Gage responded a consensus from the Committee and a decision on which objectives the Committee would agree were priorities.

Councilmember Hosmer commented on crime and poverty being related to housing. Councilmember Hardinger asked for recommendations on which objectives to prioritize and recommended approving at least two to take to the full City Council.

Councilmember Lee made a motion to consider Councilmember Horton's objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 and work through them. 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 topic of discussion was the rental inspection program. Mr. Gage introduced Martin Gugel, and he noted Mr. Gugel was now the Director of Building Development Services (BDS).

Mr. Gugel discussed the pie charts and graphs for city wide violations of Section 26 in the last twelve months, which were presented on May 15, 2024. Councilmember Carroll requested clarification that approximately 325 properties violated Section 26 and were complaint driven. Mr. Gugel responded affirmatively. He also noted there were approximately 43,000 rental units and close to 78,000 total housing units in Springfield. Mr. Gage added these complaints were primarily for the exterior of the home.

Mr. Gugel advised BDS had been reviewing approaches taken by other cities and introduced Brad Musick, Assistant Director of Building Development Services.

Mr. Musick provided a brief overview of each rental inspection program in Lawrence, Kansas, Columbia, Missouri, and St. Joseph, Missouri.

Mr. Gugel identified decision points which were key items to determine how to move forward. These included types of homes to inspect, exemptions, triggers, inspection frequency, geographic emphasis on focusing on property age or nuisance data for inspections, factors for inspections,

time allowed for mitigation or repair, fees, remedy for refusal, and health and safety criteria for immediate vacation of premises.

Councilmember Hosmer asked if there were any noted issues with the respective rental inspection programs of the three cities and if the fees were similar. Mr. Gugel responded all three cities reported no major issues with their programs, and the only variance on fees noted was St. Joseph's registration fee, which was lower than the other two.

Mr. Gage asked if the fee structures established by the three cities covered the costs of the programs. Mr. Musick responded this was a question he had for Columbia, and he did not have the answer yet.

Councilmember Hardinger asked what the next steps would be for the rental inspection program. Mr. Gage responded the Committee could discuss the decision points and determine structuring of the program at the next meeting.

Councilmember Hosmer asked for a proposal from BDS based on programs from the three cities. Councilmember Lee asked what the City's goals for the rental inspection program were. Councilmember Hosmer responded safer properties would be the goal. Mr. Gage advised it was too early to request a proposal from staff. Members of the Committee and Mr. Gage discussed how to move forward with establishing guidelines for the rental inspection program. The members of the Committee decided staff would provide recommendations on the main points at the next meeting, and the Committee would prioritize these items and establish criteria.

Councilmember Hardinger tabled the last topic on the agenda for the next meeting due to the lack of time.

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 1:19 p.m.

Prepared by Kristina D'Andrea