

June 27, 2022 Northside Neighborhood Meeting

Martinsville City Council toured the Northside area on June 27, 2022 beginning at 5:30pm. Those present for the tour were Mayor Kathy Lawson, Vice-Mayor Jennifer Bowles, and Council Members Chad Martin, Tammy Pearson and Danny Turner. Staff present included City Manager Leon Towarnicki, Building Inspector Kris Bridges, Inspector Mark Price, Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Officer Coretha Gravely, Community Development Director Mark McCaskill, Community Development Specialist Hannah Powell, and Public Works Director Jeff Gauldin.

The Neighborhood tour began at 5:30 pm from the rear of the City Municipal Bldg. Attendees traveled to Liberty Street, and Franklin Street to Dillard Street where they inspected several houses and properties. The tour continued to Warren Court, back out to Dillard and over to Franklin Street where they looked at property owned by the Lester Group and briefly discussed their plans for a park at the property. They traveled to Liberty Street, up Stultz Road to Commerce Court, and back out to Stultz where they observed conditions of houses and properties. The tour continued to Perdue Street, Quincy Street (where parking along the side of the street was a concern), back out to Stultz and to Onieda Street, Inman Street to Liberty Street, up to Greyson Street; traveled along Greyson where they noted conditions of various properties; complaints on those properties had been received in the past. Attendees continued on Greyson to Barrows Mill Road, over to Burgess to Ainsley, down Ainsley past Clearview School and back down to Barrows Mill, down to Clearview where they turned left onto Clearview and continued on, observing a number of properties and houses. The tour looped through Arden Circle and by the Transfer Station, back to Clearview and cut through Tanglewood over to Chatham Road; down Chatham Road to Banks Road, over the Myrtle Road where they again observed properties/houses, some of which had been listed previously on the Inspection's list. The tour continued from Myrtle back to Chatham Road and down to Blankenship Road to the townhouses at the end and the Pebble Creek subdivision, back out to Chatham Road, Commonwealth Blvd and Bethel Lane, over to Fairy Street and back to Commonwealth Blvd, over to Booker Road and Church Street Extension where the new paving job was discussed. The tour went back to East Church, then Starling, Market, and back to the rear of City Hall where the tour concluded at approximately 6:35 pm. Attendees generally noted that most areas were clean and well-kept, houses or properties noted as possible code violation were indicated to already be in the system. Specific notes were made regarding a few locations that will be followed up by the appropriate City departments.

Neighborhood Meeting, Monday, 7:30 pm, Clearview Wesleyan Church – In addition to those attending the tour, Clerk of Council Karen Roberts and Public Information Officer Kendall Davis attended the meeting. Mayor Lawson welcomed everyone to the meeting. City Manager Towarnicki gave a recap of the tour.

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Inspector Mark Price summarized the Inspections statistics for Northside, commenting that there were 51 notices of violations issued, 22 property maintenance/special consultation inspections and 1 demolition awaiting final inspection. Any concerns residents may have can be reported to the Inspections Department. Although a name, number and address are required to file a complaint, the reporter is protected by FOIA and that information will not be released to the property owners. Price explained that they do not have the manpower to provide proactive enforcement, they work on a complaint base only. If there are concerns of a backyard property, they can only go the same route a mail carrier can take and can not inspect property not visible from the road or from the front of the home. Price detailed what qualifies as a nuisance and what a non-valid report is. Council Member Turner referenced a resident that has a “swamp” in his backyard, a petition is being filed to pursue an extended inspection of that private property.

Mayor Lawson then opened the floor to public comments and questions

Angela Lester of 627 Quincy Street reported a neighbor who has a school bus with farm tags on it, trailers sitting on the side of the road, cinderblocks along the edge of the street, and a camper in the yard. They’ve had a lot of issues from this resident. Mayor confirmed that residence is being reviewed.

Marjorie Hollandsworth of 910 Owens Street has a neighbor that has not mowed their yard this year, they leave trashcans at the street all week, there are several dogs that run loose and there is a work van that stays parked at the end of the street. Hollandsworth also expressed concern, stating that it’s an embarrassment when the city has not mowed either side of the road

Faye Scott of 909 Owens Street says her neighbor at 906 Owens Street has 2 dogs and lets them out of the house without a leash. There was a big pile of trash put at the curb the day after trash day. She has reported these properties last year and this year. She’s called the police on the residents for fighting in the street.

Linda Trent, 935 Stonewall Court thanked Officer Gravely for getting the basketball goals on Myrtle Road removed. They have no parking signs but Trent says cars are still parking on Myrtle near Morris intersection and also on Chatham Heights Road blocking the road and making it difficult to see when pulling out into the street.

George Sloan, 218 Greyson Street is having problems with kids running around in the street late at night and garbage along the side of the street at a rental property. Sloan reported speeding cars. He voiced concern about what goes on at the apartments and mentioned multiple tenants living in a 3-room house. He recently reported tall grass to Inspections, it was cut previously but needs to be mowed again.

Woody McCain of 810 Augusta Street lives in the county but he cannot get to his house or leave his house without going thru the city. McCain asked when repeat violators go on the nuisance list, what happens to them, stating that the only time the grass gets cut at a particular location is when inspections gets involved. McCain asked how long does a city resident have to

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register a vehicle in Virginia? Police Chief Cassady explained that residents have 30 days to register a vehicle, however since COVID, there was a 4-month moratorium put into effect. There is a van on the street that has not moved in the past year, he feels confident the tag on the van is expired but it's from North Carolina. There are two properties on Chatham Road between Myrtle and Banks, he asked if Council noticed the condition of those. He's noticed there are a lot of people in the city who commit moving violations by parking on the wrong side of the street and asked if there was an ordinance related to that. Cassady confirmed there is an ordinance and the Police Department has been going thru the City issuing notices and parking tickets for repeat offenders.

Kris Bridges verified that when a property is posted, that is giving legal notice, certified letters are not sent to property owners if they live outside the city. Bridges pointed out issues with low staffing and the inability to use the Sheriff's Department inmates has made action by the Inspections Department slow, but they are making headway to catch up. Pre-COVID, it would be less than 3 weeks with 10 business days for a property owner to take action before Public Works gets involved. When the city cuts grass, a bill is sent to the property owner and will accumulate fees if not paid in a timely manner. Once the accumulated debt is 35% of the assessed value, then the city can take possession of the property. There is a program called Teachers and Cops that the City will look into that would offer a restored property as incentive to come to the area to work.

Laura Powers of 905 Luck Street said there is an issue with trucks and motorcycles speeding on the street and children wandering around late at night without adult supervision. Powers expressed concern about the corner of Clearview and Northside, stating that every winter there is a spot there that becomes icy.

Mr. Lester of 627 Quincey Street expressed concern about tires being dumped on property near Oneida Street, how to get those cleaned up and how to prevent it from continuing. He also expressed concern about the car wash business in that area.

Council Member Turner recapped the upcoming July 4 weekend events. Turner shared that there will be a ribbon cutting at the new beauty shop at 42 East Church Street around noon. The new owners at Market Square will have a ribbon cutting and free hotdogs on Saturday. Roosky's Bar & Grill will hold a soft opening on July 2. On July 4, Mayor Lawson and Turner will provide ice cold watermelons at the Mustangs game and will honor five World War II veterans, one of which will throw out the first pitch. Fireworks will be July 9 at Hooker Field.

Mayor Lawson explained that the City is in a holding pattern waiting on the courts to make decisions regarding reversion.

Lawson thanked residents for coming and the pastor for opening the church. She encouraged residents to report any concerns to the appropriate departments.

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With no further questions, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm. Several additional complaints were made in private discussions after the meeting adjourned that will be passed along to the appropriate departments.

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson
Mayor