

July 25, 2022 Northside Neighborhood Meeting

Martinsville City Council toured the Uptown and Druid Hills area on July 25, 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, Police Chief Eddie Cassady, Community Development Director Mark McCaskill and Bill Wyatt of the Martinsville Bulletin.

Tour began at 5:30 pm from the rear of the Municipal Building and traveled to East Church Street, Pine Street, Watt Street, and down Stuart Street. Council saw a house at 211 Stuart Street that's on the demo list as well as some overgrowth from shrubs encroaching into the street. The tour came out of Stuart where Council observed an area on the corner that had been reported as a sight distance issue but recently resolved. The tour traveled from there across to Fairy Street and over to Brookdale, down Brookdale where Council noted several houses on the left that were on the City's demolition list. The tour turned onto Spruce and down Windsor Lane to Indian Trail; down Indian Trail to Susan Lane and went by a location that in previous years had been a source of complaints but is now resolved. The tour continued on to Dan-Lee Terrace pausing at the end to look at a former ballfield/playground area for Druid Hills School and noted some development potential. From there, they traveled up then back down Sam Lions Trail and on to Cherokee Trail observing the first house on the left going up the street that had been abandoned and is in disrepair. From there, they traveled to Cherokee Court noting the condition of the property at 1100 Cherokee Court that's been the source of numerous neighborhood complaints. It was noted that a petition has been signed and submitted to the Circuit Court asking for a declaration of public nuisance regarding the condition of the property and impact to the neighborhood; that process is now underway. From there the tour traveled to Mulberry to Kenmar noting a location where a large tree fell recently and disrupted power service. Attendees noted a vacant and buildable lot where a house was destroyed several years ago in a gas explosion. The tour continued, traveling from there to Meadowview Lane and down Riverview Court where a number of buildable lots was noted and discussed for planning purposes and possible connection back to the end of Lanier Road. The tour traveled back out Riverview to Meadowview and to Mulberry, up Mulberry to Corn Tassel Trail, over to Sam Lions and to Country Club Drive where they went to the end noting usage of the Dick & Willie Trail and the area at the end of street for trail parking. They came back out Country Club to Sam Lions to Indian Trail and to Beverly Way, noting an area on the left where previous complaints had been received about dumping but no issues were observed this day. The tour traveled up to old Spruce Street then Corn Tassel and to new Spruce briefly discussing the approximate location where the Dick & Willie Trail will eventually cross. From there attendees proceeded along Spruce Street to the former Druid Hills Bowling Alley, now Tequila's Sports Bar where Kris Bridges outlined issues

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needing resolution before the project is completed. From there, the van traveled back to the rear of City Hall where the tour ended at 6:40 pm. Specific notes were made regarding a few locations that will be followed up by the appropriate City departments.

Neighborhood Meeting, Monday, 7:30 pm, Patrick Henry Elementary School, Church Street Extension – In addition to those attending the tour, Public Works Director Jeff Gauldin and Police Sargent Bennett attended the meeting. Mayor Lawson welcomed everyone to the meeting. City Manager Towarnicki gave a recap of the tour.

Building Inspector Kris Bridges summarized the Inspections statistics for the Uptown and Druid Hills area. There were several general questions from Council Members about valid vs invalid complaints, special consultation, how long do property owners have once property is posted, how much of the property has to be mowed if cited, and the recent situation on Clift Street was discussed where bulk materials had been dumped at the street. Staff provided an explanation of how the bulk trash program works and noted in particular that the program is not intended to pick up materials resulting from tenant evictions on rental property.

Mayor Lawson then opened the floor to public comments and questions.

Gwen Williams, 902 A Street – commented that it was time to demolish Paradise Inn and the house on First Street that burned months ago. She discussed her monthly utility bill, noting that it was consistently too high. Williams made comments about the Five Points Project and how the houses are too close to the street. Council asked to see information related to a past energy audit for this house.

Jack Fuhrman, 721 Susan Lane commented about kudzu overtaking the area he lives in, stating that kudzu is in the trees, out on the sidewalk and streets, and inquired if there is anything the City could do to force private landowners to take care of it. Kris Bridges noted that most areas are considered natural wooded areas; the kudzu issue is extensive City-wide and if owners are cited and then don't comply, the City doesn't have the resources to handle it on a widescale basis. Council Member Bowles asked if the City Attorney could review the matter and see if there's something that can be done through the City's ordinances to help with the issue.

Mike Sanguedolce, 708 Starling Avenue talked about truck traffic on Starling Avenue. City Manager Towarnicki discussed conversations with VDOT about designating an alternate truck route along Commonwealth Boulevard and currently working through a process to get that done.

Toolie Hairston, 109 Terry Street is very upset about people speeding in his neighborhood specifically on Terry, Armstead, and Fayette Streets. The Police Department indicated they patrol as much as they can, however, they can also place radar unit on the street to get an idea of when speeding might be occurring to better target enforcement. Mr.

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Hairston was advised to call the Police Department when he sees something inappropriate going on.

Forest Forschmiedt, 727 Grattan Road has a business uptown and inquired about parking enforcement along uptown streets. Is there a way to prevent business owners/operators from parking in front of their business all day and so customers could have spaces to park? There was discussion about changing limits from 2 hours to 30 minutes or even 20 minutes as existed previously. The Police Department mentioned they can no longer mark tires with chalk to enforce parking. A suggestion was made about taking date/time-stamped photos periodically for enforcement purposes, unfortunately, the Police Department does not have the staff to resume a full-time parking enforcement program. Comment was made at the end of the discussion about going back to a parking meter operation.

With no further questions, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Karen Roberts
Clerk of Council

Kathy Lawson
Mayor