



N2N COMMITTEE MINUTES

Time and Place: Friday, February 15, 2013 @ 7:45 a.m. City Hall Boardroom
Members Present: Sue Nowak, Dick Holster, Tom Holster, Jon Radtke, Janet Herring, Mayor Tipple
Others Present: Melissa Dotter, Duachee A. Yang, Mark Anesko, John Prey, Melita Ray, Officer Ben Graham, Bill Hebert, Jeremy Kopp, Kathi Groeschel

1) Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the previous minutes did not take place as the committee members didn't have the minutes in front of them. This will take place next month.

2) East Towne District Update

The East Towne District had various questions for the Zoning Inspector, Bill Hebert and Officer Ben Graham regarding their neighborhood group. Holster spoke to the fact that their Neighborhood group would like to be pro-active and walk through the neighborhood and address some of the chronic offenders with numerous inspection/crime/drug citations. Maybe the neighborhood group can tap into volunteer resources and grant money and get a few of the worst issues resolved that way. If the inspections department hasn't had luck with citations and judgments, maybe the neighborhood group could exert peer pressure and if it's a financial issue, offer help with volunteers and grant money. They asked if they could obtain copies of the citation letters that are sent out from the Inspections Department on a monthly basis. Inspector Hebert indicated that they cannot provide copies without an open records request but that all copies are sent to City Alderpersons and they are welcome to get a copy from the Alderperson in that area. Holster said the Alderperson in this area has a scheduling conflict and is not able to attend their monthly group meetings. They will reach out to him again.

Hebert indicated that the Registered Agent list they collected last year from landlords is not tied to the Land Records and that would be helpful from a Police Department perspective when dealing with a nuisance issue after business hours. The City IT Department has been contacted to see if this is possible.

Officer Graham attended a conference in Milwaukee and said they have educational resources available regarding landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities. Continued education needs to happen in Wausau. Radtke mentioned that another aspect of the problem is a lack of money/funding. The current real estate market has depressed property values significantly making it difficult for landlords to get financing and refinance properties, and if you don't have the money to fix a problem and you can't get financing, then how can you address the problem? Officer Graham said he understood that but being a landlord is a business and if a landlord doesn't have the means to keep up their properties as state statutes regulate, they should consider selling their properties. Holster agreed, however, stated that many landlords would find it difficult to sell their properties for more than what they owe on it. There was an article from the Davenport Gazette that was sent to the group called "*Night and Day: Davenport landlords, police, residents step up to bring back a troubled neighborhood.*" Officer Graham stated that he had read the article and had placed a call into Davenport PD to find out more about their programs. Davenport Police have found 154 wanted men and women through collaborative tenant screening with landlords, and have arrested 60 of them.

Hebert said there is a broad definition for the word "blight". As a zoning inspector, he has to be impartial and consider the whole city and not "target" a particular area. He hears a number of issues here today. He is more than willing to assist neighborhood groups with their goals. He works consistently with the Police Department on nuisance issues.

Herring asked if there is a current plan to go after the worse landlords/properties? Hebert said there is a process in place but with one property inspector for a city population of 40,000, it makes it very difficult. Herring agreed, however, this is a very frustrating answer.

Hebert indicated that there are 15 properties in the City that have had municipal judgments against them in excess of \$200,000.00 and that still doesn't result in compliance with certain people. How does one obtain municipal court judgment records? Is that information publicized? Would it be helpful to get that information

to see who the bad landlords are? Who are the ones that are constantly being called in/fined/not paying their fees? Holster said the landlord licensing that the city is looking into is just one more layer of regulations and enforcements that he feels won't work. If the current layers aren't working, how will adding more layers help? When a house sits vacant for a time, then that's considered blight. It's a vicious cycle. Landlords are in a difficult position, too. They don't have extra money to fix their properties and he understands the whole "business" aspect of being a landlord. It is not as profitable a business as many would think.

Holster commented on John Fisher's proposal to categorize landlords into various license statuses i.e. preferred, conditional, etc. Holster feels getting that information won't help. 90% of tenants could care less if a landlord is labeled a "preferred" landlord, or has a "conditional" landlord license. When individuals are looking for housing, they check craigslist for a one or two-bedroom place in a price range they can afford. The landlord's credentials on the City website are not important to them.

Radtke asked the Inspections Department to assist in pointing out three top priorities their neighborhood group can specifically address and work on.

Melissa Dotter interjected that the AODA Partnership will be conducting a campaign called "The Push Back" This involves taking pride in your neighborhood and they hope to roll this out in March, There will be a media blitz, various public service announcements, and will be another resource for neighborhoods. Due to the time, she will speak more about this at next month's meeting.

3) Hmong Heritage Month Participation

Ms. Yang spoke to the group about the Hmong Heritage Month and would like the committee to fill out the Vendor Registration Form. Groeschel will complete this and the N2N committee will set up a booth and assign times next month. Ms. Yang reiterated the fact that this event is NOT just for the Hmong population. They are focusing on getting everyone from the community involved. This is a family friendly event and is intended for all cultures and diversity to come together and learn from one another. This would tie in nicely to neighborhood groups and help each other understand, communicate and network better.

3) Old/New Business and future agenda items

Officer Graham asked if there was anyone here today representing the Werle Park Neighborhood. He understood that they haven't met as a group since October and wondered why. He tried reaching Christine Van De Yacht by phone and was unsuccessful. Radtke said that he understood that the Lincoln School Principal has moved on to a different school and she was very instrumental as a partner with the Werle Park group. Since she has moved, the Werle Park group doesn't have a place to meet.

Agenda items for next month include:

1. AODA Partnership Presentation by Melissa Dotter
2. Hmong Heritage Booth Sign-up
3. "Clean It Up, Wausau" Event
4. East Towne Update

A motion to adjourn was made by Radtke and seconded by Holster. Meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Kathi Groeschel
Mayor's Office, Wausau City Hall