

REGULAR MEETING OF PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
January 5, 2010

ROLL CALL: The regular meeting of the Public Safety Advisory Committee was held at the Community Center. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. Present were members Cindy Comprani, Laura Kressler, Lou Vazquez, Ed Hickey and Herbert Wyche. Also present were Council members Ed Puttens and Silke Pope and City Liaison Mary Johnson. Jim Sterling, Assistant Director of Planning and Community Development was also present upon request from the Committee.

MINUTES: The minutes from the December 1, 2009 meeting were read approved.

WELCOME: Ed Hickey, Acting Chair, welcomed Mr. Herbert Wyche. Mr. Wyche is a 7 year resident of Greenbelt and resides in Greenbriar. Mr. Wyche said he has seen a change in Greenbelt in the past years that has caused him concern. He has read the crime reports in the community papers and decided it was time for him to get involved and become an activist. Mr. Wyche stated he was looking forward to being a member of the PSAC.

OLD BUSINESS: LAKE MARKER UPDATE – Ed said that the Mile Marker’s around Buddy Attick Lake had been approved by Council. He said that Laura did an excellent job making the presentation before Council. The signage needs to be determined.

NEW BUSINESS: Jim Sterling was introduced to the Committee. Ed Hickey told Jim that he was asked to attend our meeting because Councilmember Ed Puttens had said the he wanted the PSAC to get involved in the safety issues at Empirian Village.

Jim stated that there has been 100% increase in complaints this year at Empirian Village (EV) and felt that there had been a general decline in the property. Jim stated that there are a lot of vacant apartments. At one point there has been a burglary ring at the complex resulting in an increased police presence.

Code violations at the complex are not being repaired. The City of Greenbelt’s policy states that once a citation is issued you have 14 days to fix the problem. EV has not repaired the problems listed on the citations and were not paying the fines tendered. Consequently, approximately two weeks ago, the City of Greenbelt did not renew EVs license to rent apartments and fined them an additional \$250,000. EV paid the delinquent fines from the citations which totaled approximately \$60,000 but has not repaired the citations issued and has not paid the \$250,000 fine. Planning has obtained a list of residents from the Police Department to check and see if anyone has moved in since EVs license to lease apartments has been revoked.

Jim stated that 9 buildings are uninhabitable. EV is housing 116 tenants in hotels. This is due to electrical problems and 2 buildings were destroyed by fire which they believe was caused by a space heater. Jim stated that EV tried to upgrade the electrical system

without doing a heavy up. Consequently, the wires are not sized properly and can now cause a fire.

Jim stated the City does not have a chance to see what type of job EV would do in terms of preventive maintenance. EV has not been doing the necessary repairs and never gets ahead to start a preventative maintenance program.

Laura asked if EV could ever be shut down. Jim replied that we would have to get a court injunction against them. Cindy asked if we have issued demands. Jim stated the City had sent a letter that they owe money and can not longer rent.

Cindy asked about the buildings that were damaged by fire and if the City can make them tear the buildings down. Jim replied that EV. is now working with insurance adjustors and has secured the buildings. A restoration company is now fixing the buildings.

Herb asked if the City can make them provide security for these buildings. Jim stated that E.V. has placed a fence around these buildings and that is considered security. Herb asked if the vacant buildings have fostered drugs, etc. Jim stated that the statistics are down so his sense is no.

Cindy asked if there is anything that the PSAC can do. Jim said that tenants need to be involved. Laura suggested that we hold a public forum at EV. Silke stated that the last time the PSAC held a public forum, 1 person attended. She said that we need to advertise at EV. Jim Sterling suggested that perhaps we could put flyers in the children's backpacks at schools to advertise the meetings. Lou suggested that we put the flyers in English and Spanish.

RESIGNATION: Ed Hickey announced that he will be resigning as a member of PSAC effective at the end of this meeting. Ed has served on the PSAC for ten years.

ELECTION – A new Chair must be elected for the PSAC. Nominations were held and Laura Kressler was nominated. A secret ballot was held and Laura Kressler was voted as Chair of the PSAC unanimously.

Laura thanked the PSAC and also thanked Ed for his years of service to the PSAC.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting was scheduled for February 2nd at 7 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.