

MNA Town Hall Meeting

February 6, 2019

Attendance: 28 people, not counting the RPD speakers

Notetaker: Amie Alscheff

Wayne Williams, MNA President, started the meeting at 7:15 pm.

Announcements

Amie Alscheff distributed flyers for the Landmark Society's "Heart Bombing" event, taking place at the Maplewood Community Library and at the historic Driving Park Hotel on Selye Terrace, Saturday, Feb. 9

Guest Speaker: Daisy Rivera Algarin, Director of Neighborhood Service Centers

Presentation on the City of Rochester Nuisance Abatement Program, after the re-design of the program that took place in 2018.

A handout was distributed. Jim White later sent this out in PowerPoint format to his email distribution list.

Highlights:

1. Purpose of the program hasn't changed—find and remedy public nuisance situations
2. Key change—notices are now posted on the door to a property telling the resident or owner that nuisance points have been assigned to the property. The goal is to have someone from the property contact the City immediately to try to resolve the situation.
3. Waiver of points is possible for violations that don't involve serious issues like weapons, fire, alcohol
4. Property managers may be contacted rather than owners, if they are responsible for the property
5. Advisory Board—an all volunteer board that gave input through the redesign process in 2018
6. There is team reporting to Daisy on a monthly basis to follow up on how the new program is working. So far, these are some results to report:
 - Communication with the Neighborhood Service Centers has improved. They are getting calls from property owners/property managers because of the new practice of posting a notice on the door when points are issued.
 - Abatement plans are working to fix the nuisance issues
 - the Advisory Board is working well
 - She is preparing a 6-month report, and that will be made public when it's completed. It will give a snapshot of the number of properties with points assigned, the number of abatement plans in place, and the number of properties that have reached the "threshold" of points for

the year and may be subject to legal proceedings (there are no properties in the NW that have reached this point)

Q & A

(During the meeting, these questions were interjected during the presentation. I've gathered them all here at the end for clarity.)

Q: Does the City check a property manager's credentials when dealing with a nuisance violation? NYS requires that property managers have to be licensed NY real estate brokers. If they don't have a license, they can be shut down.

A: They have not been checking credentials, but will look into this.

Q: Are the advisory board members City employees?

A: No, City employees are not allowed to serve on this board.

Q: Property owners get penalized under this system. But are the actual violators at the property given an appearance ticket?

A: If a crime is committed, then yes. For noise violations, they would be issued a municipal code ticket and that triggers nuisance points on the property.

Officer Maldonado from RPD added here that RPD can't force residents to open the door to them, therefore the points system alerts the landlord to problems at the property and they can decide to evict the tenant.

The original commenter responded that evicting tenants just moves the problem around the city, and has the unintended consequence of uprooting children, creating a rootless generation with no sense of community.

Q: What are the possible penalties when a property reaches the maximum number of points allowed under the system?

A: In extreme cases, a business can be shut down. Or a rental property can lose its Certificate of Occupancy (C of O) for one year.

Q: Does a police officer have to be called to the property to trigger points?

A: Officer Waldo answered this question. When they review reports that have come in for the day, they notice which issues may trigger points and pursue that. So far, most points that have been assigned in the NW Quadrant have been related to drugs, weapons, and sale of cigarettes to minors.

For noise issues, don't call 911 and ask the operator to send someone out to issue nuisance points to a property, they won't know what you're talking about. Noise issues can be reported to the Neighborhood Service Center, even days after the incident happened. Don't have to have a police officer come and hear the noise, they will issue a ticket based on your deposition.

Closing note from Daisy: The City is discussing with the MNA and the West Ridge Business Association plans for upkeep to the sculpture and median at the intersection of 104 and Lake Avenue. They may be asking for volunteers to help with this in the spring.

Report from the Rochester Police Department, Lake Section

June 20 is the date set for the annual RPD outreach event at Sacred Heart

The next PCIC meeting will be February 19 at AQ

Crime report:

- You may have heard about home invasion robberies on Pullman and Clay. These are not really legit home invasions, nothing for the wider neighborhood to worry about.
- There was an assault/shooting at 1282 Dewey, near Kislingbury. The victim was not cooperating with police. He has a history of past gang activity.
- A traffic stop resulted in an arrest for an illegal firearm
- Burglaries: 14 in the past month, and this is after the arrest of a career burglar last month. A lot of these have been the result of people leaving their doors unlocked.
- Car break-ins: 2

Q&A

Q: Where can we find traffic accident data? He is wondering whether accidents have gone up after the removal of the red light cameras.

A: Monroe County Transportation Safety Board. Tony Micciche is on that Board, and he can help find information.

Q: Ongoing issues at the corner of Dewey and Magee. People park right up to the corner, and there's no sign telling them it's illegal. Makes it hard to turn safely. Also the parking lot in front of the beauty shop is full of young men all day long—you never see a woman going in to the shop. Is it even a legitimate shop or just a front for criminal activity?

A: Lt. Waldo says they can send Parking Enforcement out to check on the parking situation. Parking Enforcement is not really an RPD function, it's a separate City department.

Q: Is RPD looking into the incidents of gunfire at the corner of Seneca Parkway and Raines Park? The commenter says she has personally counted 17 shots fired (in three separate incidents) this year, just at times when she's been home and able to call 911. The incidents happened in March, August, and December.

- In March, the resident's daughter looked out their window and saw the shooter.
- In August, at 4 pm, two cars passed each other on the street and one driver stopped, got out of the car, and fired shots down the street at the other car. This happened while residents were out working in their yards nearby.
- In December, the shots were fired at 4 am

Lt. Waldo says he will look up these reports and investigate further. Overall, the number of shooting incidents in the NW is within the "cone of normalcy" and they don't have the resources to watch every corner. Not a good answer, but that's all he can say. He recommended looking at the RPD Crime Portal to access data on number of shots fired around the city for comparison.

Molly Clifford suggested setting up a training session to show people how to use the RPD Crime Portal, because it is not user-friendly.

Q: Another person here asked, going back to the issue of Magee and Dewey: that corner has been a problem for the past couple of years. What is RPD doing to stop it?

A: (No response, possibly because another commenter interrupted with the next question before he had a chance to answer.)

Q: As a landlord, I spend approximately \$3000 to evict a tenant due to problem behavior, which isn't sustainable for business. How do we put more onus on the actual criminal, not the landlord?

A: (From Molly Clifford) The City can only control so much. One issue is that there are restrictions on how the City can deal with tenants receiving housing assistance from Monroe County. This is part of the reason why landlords bear the brunt, because it is a business for them.

Follow up from the commenter: What about some sort of "bad tenant registry"?

Molly: It's been tried before, and deemed illegal by the state.

Q: Do corner stores fall under the nuisance points system?

A: Yes, if they get enough points in a year they can be shut down.

Follow up: So what about the store at the corner of Magee?

A: They can't go back and assign points retroactively, but if it gets enough points in the coming year, there might be consequences.

Here there was a question from another person in attendance, directly to the landlord who commented earlier: Would it be worth it to you to invest that \$3000 you lost by hiring people in the community to do work? He suggest opening a community-owned corner store to combat problem businesses and also fight poverty in the neighborhood.

Report from Molly Clifford, NW City Council Representative

- She will still be in the City Council position through the end of the year
- Not all RPD officers have body-worn cameras yet, more are on the way
- There will be one more Police Accountability Board advisory meeting, the date is being rescheduled. It may be February 21.
- Re: the Driving Park Hotel, there has been discussion between the City, the Landmark Society, and Rochester Refugee Resettlement. They are looking at the property tomorrow (February 7) at 3 pm.
- Winterfest/Polar Plunge is this upcoming weekend in Charlotte
- The next Coffee Meeting is March 2, at Linda's New York Pizza on Lyell Avenue

Q&A

Q: What's going on with St. Bernard's?

A: The deal to transfer ownership is going through.

Q: What happened at the last City Council meeting?

A: All issues up for vote passed.

Q: Is there still a law on the books saying the multi-family properties that are vacant for more than 8 months revert back to being single occupancy?

A: She's going to hold that question for Bruce Wilder to answer.

Report from Monroe County Legislator Cindy Kaleh (28th District)

Cindy missed this meeting due to the weather.

Report from Monroe County Legislator Tony Micciche (26th District)

- He is working with early intervention. The waiting list for babies in need has gone from 43 to 150 since the fall. The number of coordinators employed to provide services has dropped from 43 in 1996 to 7 currently.
- He reiterated that the Monroe County property tax cut is not actually a tax cut. The County is collecting more in dollars, even though the rate has lowered.
- He helped a Vietnam veteran access benefits he was entitled to but was having trouble getting.
- He's doing the Polar Plunge this weekend.

Bruce Wilder, City of Rochester (Northwest Neighborhood Service Center)

Regarding the earlier question about C of O: after the property is vacant for about a year, the City can tell the owner to convert it back to a single. But the owner can apply for a new C of O to keep it as a multi-family property.

Process for getting a C of O for rental properties requires an inspection by the City every 6 years for a 1-2 family building. For buildings with 3 or more apartments, inspection happens every 3 years. There's an inspection fee of around \$100.

Date has been set for the next Clean Sweep: Saturday, May 11. Neighborhood groups are encouraged to call his office to suggest projects. The number is 428-7620.

New shops in Maplewood:

Too Pretty to Eat, 560 West Ridge Road (next to McGillicuddy's). It's a dessert shop right now, but the owner plans to expand in future to become a café.

- New takeout Mexican restaurant in the 1400 block of Dewey Avenue.

Salon at 1298 Dewey Avenue is reopening soon. It's been closed since July. The owner was having problems with people loitering.

Illegal auto repair shop happening on the street near the corner of Lakeview and Dewey Avenue is becoming a nuisance. He stopped for a while, but it needs to be addressed again.

Announcements and discussion

Enrica Fleming reminded everyone to renew memberships before the upcoming election, and invite any new neighbors who have moved in recently to join. Forms available on the table, and will be available soon on the website.

Wayne Williams announced that there are two open Board of Directors positions to be filled in this year's election. The primary requirement for being a Board member is being an active, paid-up MNA member. Speak to Wayne if you are interested in being on the Board.

The meeting ended at 8:30.