

CITY OF MILFORD
COMMUNITY CODE ENFORCEMENT MEETING
Minutes of Meeting
August 6, 2009

A meeting was held in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers at City Hall at 201 S Walnut Street, Milford, DE on Thursday evening, August 6, 2009.

PRESIDING: City Manager David Baird
IN ATTENDANCE: Code Enforcement Officers Don Williams and CC Dennis, Third Ward Councilmen Owen Brooks and Doug Morrow, First Ward Councilmen Michael Spillane and Steve Johnson
ALSO: Recording Secretary Christine Crouch

The meeting began at 6:30 pm with Mr. Baird welcoming the group and thanked everyone for attending.

He stated most attendees are aware from previous meetings, this is the fourth or fifth time this group has gotten together. He wanted to take the time to update everyone since the last meeting and introduce Milford Housing Development Corporation.

With that said, Mr. Baird asked Don Williams to update the group on the activities taking place in the neighborhood.

Mr. Williams introduced himself and CC Dennis and explained the two major goals of the department since CC started was to improve the appearance of this neighborhood by enforcing the codes and getting a better handle on rental licenses.

In working on improving the appearance of the neighborhood, abandoned cars have been identified. Abandoned cars are those that are not tagged and are inoperable. Mr. Williams and Mr. Dennis are sending out notices to have the cars removed within 15 days. If not removed, the City will tow. If left unclaimed, the Dept of Transportation will take possession.

Mr. Williams reviewed a power point presentation. He displayed pictures of not only abandoned cars, which are now being seen more and more, but also a house that was in despicable condition.

Mr. Williams asked CC Dennis to review the status of the rental licenses.

Mr. Dennis explained he is focusing on property maintenance issues and his main concern is the safety of the tenants. Since he started here three months ago, he has determined there are approximately 1600 rental units in the City, of which about 800 are single family. 1384 licenses had been issued and he is working to get the remaining 188 licensed. Recently a final notice letter went out to 188 landlords and 101 of those have become licensed. The next step is performing rental unit inspections.

Mr. Baird explained they are only putting a dent on the issues out there. People are getting the message and putting effort into their property. Fact is, these two gentlemen and other City officials cannot do it alone. Landlords and tenants are encouraged to help and get involved.

Mrs. Sacco asked when sidewalks on Front St are getting done? She wanted to do hers, but not without help from city. Mr. Baird confirmed she was referring to SE Front Street and said it is still scheduled to be done, and he is the final phase of finalizing the funding from DelDOT. He believes he is about 90% complete but anticipates construction will not be seen until spring. There is limited funding from the City available. Mr. Baird further explained a letter will be mailed to the area residents regarding the progress. Council must first give final approval once the details of the funding are ironed out, then an open meeting will take place to explain the project. Easements from property owners may be needed as well.

Mr. Lofland asked if people are still living in the slum house that was shown on the power point. Mr. Williams explained the landlord has addressed the immediate safety issues and yes people are in there while work is being done. The landlord continues to work on issues while residents living there. He had 24 hours to get specific issues resolved, and did it. Mr. Williams did not want to kick the tenants out and make landlord pay to put them up. He didn't want to condemn it if the landlord could do something in 24 hours.

Mr. Lofland asked if the City been paid for the house that was cleaned up by City? Mr. Williams explained when he receives the bill, he directs it to the accounts payable and they in turn bill the owner. If the bill is not paid, a lien will be placed on the house.

Mr. Baird recollected at the last few meetings, homeowners wanted to know what kind of funding is available to them to assist with improving their houses. After some initial dialog between himself and MHDC it was quickly realized the common goals. In the last two months, Mr. Baird has come up with some ways to help homeowners and get them on the right track for making a difference in the community. He then introduced Mr. Russell Huxtable of Milford Housing Development Corporation.

Mr. Huxtable explained MHDC is a private non-profit housing corporation run by a Board of Directors. It was formed in 1977 starting with Academy Apartments, which recently undertook major renovations. They aim to provide decent, safe, affordable housing and frankly found the pictures in the power point presentation shocking. MHDC works with income restricted individuals and the USDA Rural Development grant to find housing options. Another grant the USDA offers is the Housing Preservation Program where the USDA provides money to homeowners to improve their properties. This money can be used in conjunction with the \$7500 grant already in place. The money does not need to be paid back until the home is sold. MHDC vision is not to renovate your kitchen, but is really about the safety of the home, i.e. water heaters, a new roof, etc. Mr. Huxtable explained the homeowner doesn't even have to go out and find the contractor, the MHDC does that for you. Mr. Huxtable left his card with Mr. Williams and Mr. Dennis and encouraged everyone to contact him to find out how he can get money for them to improve their homes.

A question was asked regarding the traffic regulations on Front Street, specifically large tractor trailer trucks. Mr. Baird stated the biggest issues he hears are on NE and NW Front Streets and now SE Front Street. Unfortunately these are State roads, not City roads, therefore the City does not have the ability to enforce action on them. He understands the issues, and just today spoke with the Department of Transportation about the issues.

A woman in the audience asked what the regulations are for outdoor wood burning furnaces in Milford. The person that lives behind her has numerous cords of wood all around the yard not stacked properly which attracts vermin and to top it off when the outdoor furnace is burning, there is so much smoke and burnt paper in the air she can't use her back yard.

Mr. Baird stated he has done research on these outdoor furnaces and found they are most used in rural areas in the West. Obviously the smoke is the issue. The audience member stated there is also one on Truitt Ave and another is somewhere in the City as well. Mr. Baird stated they are not regulated by the EPA like woodstoves are. The woman then asked if a permit had to be pulled in order to obtain this furnace. Mr. Williams explained per Mr. Dennehy the Building Inspector, there are no regulations on these.

With no further questions from the audience, Mr. Baird thanked everyone for coming out tonight and gave mid October as the next meeting date. If there are any questions in the meantime, please speak with either himself or Mr. Williams and Mr. Dennis.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Christine R. Crouch
Recording Secretary