



MINUTES

Committee on Public Safety

Friday, August 30 2016 @ 6:00 p.m.

2709 S. Washington, McLaren Education Center

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting called to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilmember Carol Wood, Chair

Councilmember Adam Hussain, Vice Chair

Councilmember Kathie Dunbar, Member

OTHERS PRESENT

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff

Council President Brown Clarke

Billie O'Berry, City Attorney

Eric Lacy, LSJ

Kathy Miles

John Miles

Stacey Locke, Peckham Work Force Development Program

Sara Anthony, Ingham County Commissioner

Tony Baltimore, Lansing Housing Commission Board Member

State Representative Tom Cochran

Patricia Baines – Lake, Director Lansing Housing Commission

Bobby Joyce, Lansing Housing Commission Board Member

Don Schaur, Lansing Housing Commission

Glenda Acker

Sal Garcia

Derrell Slaughter, Lansing Area ACLU

Tiffany Robins

Shari Baty, Lansing Housing Commission

Pastor Hernandez

Delia Gomez

Kathy Tobe, COCA

Al Platt, CEI-CMH

Tia Page

Amy Fountain

Shannon Pullman

Andrew Foreman

Marlene Wagonschutz

Nichole Beard, TCOA

Elaine Womboldt
Alfonso Rubin Jr.
Travas Houston

Councilmember Wood started the meeting with an overview of the property, past meetings, and issues that were presented to the Committee at previous meetings. The residents asked the Council to intervene for their safety. Council reached out to HUD, and was told HUD had items they were reviewing also. There was a recap on the May 25th meeting along with a meeting hosted by LHC at 3200 S. Washington. The Committee understands there is now a Community Policing Officer on site, and there will be additional security camera installed. The residents were encouraged when speaking at this meeting, identifying how long they have been a resident. The goal of this meeting is to determine based on the information provided by Lansing Housing Commission and HUD whether changes were taking place and whether residents were feeling better.

Councilmember Hussain outlined his onsite visits since January where he witnessed lack of security, public intoxication, crimes of assault, lack of cleanliness and bed bugs. Councilmember Hussain stated he took photos during his visits and shared those with Committee and in turn they became part of the record and available to the media. He shared that during earlier meetings someone had made a statement that 95% of the residents were happy, it is his belief that they were not. Councilmember Hussain then noted that Mr. Baltimore with the LHC has visited the site with him and taken the concerns back to the Commission. The goal today is to talk about how to move forward, and how to keep the neighborhood at the level residents to deserve.

Councilmember Dunbar asked for show of hands how many at the meeting were residents.

Sarah Anthony Ingham County Commissioner spoke briefly about her family experience with the property, and was in attendance to listen, and to see if there are any things the County can do to help.

Council President Brown Clarke recognized the residents for their attendance, and participating in part of the solution. She also acknowledged she had attended the earlier meeting by the LHC at the property and took a tour then.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Fountain, resident for almost a year on 5th floor, provided a history of when she moved in and was unable to use the elevator at her floor due to people congregating in the hallway partying. Ms. Fountain did acknowledge the recent changes since Officer Arnold has arrived. There are no longer people loitering in the hallways, it is quieter, and the atmosphere in the building is friendlier. The community room is now open and has been utilized more. There are plans to have the Community Room open in the future from 9 am - 9 pm once there Resident Council is established. Lastly Ms. Fountain noted that the public drinking on the property is down to 0%, so the residents feel comfortable to sit outside at gazebo. Ms. Fountain asked it be noted that there are still issues in stairwell regarding odor and the LHC has told residents they are looking for a company to re-do the cement stairs and get the smell out. Ms. Fountain did point out that if the current management stays they will be ok.

Ms. Cleola, resident for 3 years, voiced her concerns to the Committee and members of the public on the continued strain between the LHC and the resident, along with the potential for no funds to repair and maintain the boilers for heating system. Some residents are using their stoves for heat in those situations. Ms. Cleola was appreciative of Councilmember Hussain, Council, the Mayor and the community for their continued concern for the residents. Now

people can communicate with each other where there used to live in fear. They need better communication with Management and currently they still feel they don't have it. Ms. Cleola does not want to wait for Council to tell them how life is going to be. Councilmember Dunbar asked Ms. Cleola to clarify the perception of the residents that need to change. Ms. Cleola said the perception on management, there was a poor management team and they kept the residents in the dark. Currently the residents still have the mentality that whatever they say it might come back on them, or they are scared to approach situations because of what has happened in the past. The residents need to be empowered, and hope for, not hope less.

Ms. Fountain informed the Committee that the building currently is not set up for children, in particular there is a concern the screens on the windows come out on the upper floors which is a potential hazard. Hallway screens that get taken out are replaced within an hour, however, by management.

Ms. O'Berry asked Ms. Cleola who works in the evenings when Officer Arnold is not there. Ms. Cleola acknowledged there is no one, and there is no security at night or emergency number to call. Ms. Fountain offered to provide Ms. Cleola with Mr. Arnold cell number, which some residents already have. She noted that periodically officers to do a drive-thru when Officer Arnold is not there.

Mr. Foreman, resident for 2 years, noted that there was a security guard at night when he first moved in, but after his first month the security guard was no longer employed, and he was told it was because HUD had lost funds. At that point everything got worse. One change that has helped recently was the locking of the laundry room, which is where the parties and fights used to occur nightly. Mr. Foreman also confirmed the presence of Officer Arnold has helped out tremendously. Mr. Foreman concluded by asking for security at night.

Mr. Houston, resident for 3 years, stated he concerns with noise, and different neighbor issues. He had complained to management and the police, but his opinion has been that nothing has changed. Mr. Houston also noted that he had an issue with bed bugs, and there was one inspection after the treatment but he has not had any additional inspection. Mr. Houston asked for the laundry to be open 24 hours because he prefers to do his laundry at night. The drop box used for payments needs to be fixed to make it easier for the materials that are deposit in it. Mr. Houston spoke briefly on safety and security in the hallways due to non-residents trying to get into apartments. There is the perception that since they knocked on his door first other tenants think the non-residents are friends of his. He gave his opinion that maybe the LHC should tear down and start over. Councilmember Wood encouraged Mr. Houston to introduce himself to Officer Arnold the next time he sees him.

Ms. Cleola told everyone present about situations at the South Washington entrance where non-residents hang out waiting for someone to let them in, therefore she feels threatened.

Mr. Baltimore acknowledged everyone for their attendance, and wished to continue to listen and hear all the concerns. He also wanted Council to know they are taking the concerns serious, and have been getting to all LHC properties throughout the City. He did acknowledge that as a Commission they set policy, and rely on the executive director to manage the day to day. Therefore the Commission sometimes does not know everything, but encourages residents to contact him if they have questions or concerns. Mr. Baltimore did correct a statement he made at an earlier meeting where he state 95% of the residents were happy, he misspoke and meant to state 95% were doing the right thing, paying rent on time and complying with the rules. He acknowledged there have been "bad apples" and they have worked daily with LPD to weed them out. His belief is that he has heard that some residents want police presence and some residents don't. Because of that he does not want the

residents to feel like their home is a prison. Previous residents had admitted to keeping the exterior doors open for convenience; however they have now educated the residents on the safety concern. Mr. Baltimore asked the residents to understand they are listening to the concerns, and the Commission has monthly meetings, and the residents are invited to come tell them what concerns they have so they can address management. In regards to Mr. Houston comment on the bed bugs, there is a policy in place and they do inspections at no cost to residents. They will continue conversations regarding the HUD funding and the planning process in applying for the assistance. They will continue to speak to Council about the progress on this, but assured the residents they will not be just kicked out they will be part of the planning.

Ms. Fountain informed the LHC members that the residents do get charged for bed bug treatments if they are not home when the appointment is scheduled, however they are only given 24 hours' notice for those appointments, and they are also told that if they are not prepared for the treatment, they will have their lease terminated. Secondly she brought to their attention that if they lock themselves out of their apartments, they have to pay \$50 to have their door opened.

Ms. Baines-Lake spoke on the charge for the service, due to the fact maintenance crew are on-call they have to be paid for 2 hours in the form of overtime. If they are locked out during the day there is no charge. Ms. Fountain asked why a trust worthy person cannot be trusted with a master key in those instances. Ms. Baines-Lake stated there are issues for a potential lawsuit if it was not an employee of LHC.

Ms. Cleola than asked why when they get their keys they are only given one key, and Ms. Baines-Lake could not provide a reason for that.

Ms. Baines-Lake began by stating to the residents that "this is a journey not a race". HUD is required to inform the residents so they are part of the solution. As far as the heating system, the current system is held together with "tape, and as long as residents are living in the building there will be heat, and she acknowledged this was the first time she has heard there issues of no heat in the winter. She also verified that as Ms. Fountain stated that any screens in the hallway are replaced as soon as they are pushed out. They have been working with the LFD concerning screens, however being told they cannot seal them, because it is an egress. The conversations began between the residents and Ms. Baines-Lake and Councilmember Wood called for order.

Councilmember Brown Clarke asked for the discussion not to be a point counter point discussion, but continue the open process by the Committee. They can hear the issues and continue their communications with the Lansing Housing Commission, and work on solutions.

A resident in the neighborhood spoke up on her frustration that the residents feel they have to live in fear for their safety. She stated her opinion that the property needs security on site, and she added she would like more police on Hodge to stop speeding vehicles.

Ms. Fountain asked if the LHC management could provide parenting classes to the residents who have young children since they are unable to seal the screens to the windows. Councilmember Wood referred Ms. Fountain to speak to Ms. Anthony who is the Ingham County Commissioner and can work with County on the classes.

Councilmember Hussain reminded the residents that there is a "dad" class currently on site that the residents should continue to advertise for new parents.

Ms. Fountain confirmed the residents are working on providing a newsletter to keep the residents connected, and they will have a Residence Council by the end of the month.

Councilmember Dunbar asked if there was a commercial dryer on site to help with the appropriate temperature to kill bed bugs, and if not if there were funds in the LHC budget to purchase one. Ms. Baines-Lake acknowledged they had looked into it, however it was more than just purchasing, there are current issues of retro fit it into the laundry. Councilmember Wood stated she would make calls for assistance on the purchase of a dryer.

Councilmember Dunbar then asked how the residents have funding for printing and distribution of the newsletter. "Moose" stated it will be taken care of in-house, and the office staff has already said they will provide as many copies as needed. Councilmember Dunbar offered her office staff assistance, and also encouraged social media pages. Ms. Fountain informed her that currently there is only internet in the Community Room, and Ms. Baines-Lake spoke up stating that Comcast has committed to work with increasing the service to work with the office staff on their needs also.

Ms. Locke Peckham Work Force Development agrees with the earlier comments from the resident who voiced concern about security in the building.

Mr. Platt Community Mental Health introduced himself and stated they were there to provide contact information to residents if they needed assistance.

Ms. Locke spoke again recounting a communication with a resident who also attends Peckham. This resident voiced their concerns of safety to her.

Ms. Beard acknowledged she herself does not have clients that live at 3200 S Washington, but is taking back information to Tri-County Office on Aging that do have clients in the building.

Ms. Cleola spoke again about her frustration on the lack of safety, the cost on the residents to eradicate the bed bugs and lasted asked management for additional bags. Councilmember Wood stated she would work on another method.

Representative Cochran introduced himself, and offered his support and assistance to the Council, Commission and the residents. Representative Cochran offered his assistance at the State level to reach out for any support they need, and any support the Lansing Housing Commission needs.

Ms. Baines-Lake spoke in support of the Residents Council being formed, and on behalf of LHC acknowledged all organizations for their offers of assistance. Representative Cochran offered his office assistance to Ms. Baines-Lake for any support they need.

Ms. O'Berry encouraged the residents that if they see something to say something, because that is how the law can fight criminal activity. They are encouraged to report issues to Officer Arnold, and report it to the LPD. If they ban together and together report things, then there is a less chance they will be singled out.

Councilmember Brown Clarke encouraged the residents to work with the Resident Council, and they will play a key role in how to get information to the residents. Secondly she assured them that City Council has a long term commitment

Councilmember Dunbar assured the residents that positive use discourages negative uses. She provided a suggestion that the residents create and distribute a questionnaire to find out

how everyone best communicates, such as mail, email, social media, etc. She also encouraged a venue to communicate on each floor.

Councilmember Hussain spoke about the progress that has been made, that has been driven by the residents. They feel safer now, and have been empower with their ability to speak out. He did state his concern on how to sustain the improvements on site, without Officer Arnold. There is hope there will be positive action on moving people into the site, not driving people out. Councilmember Hussain then mentioned items that still need to be addressed, once it is fully staffed can there be something to stagger their presence with weekend and night time hours, providing funds for deadbolts locks, an update on the new ID system, and the security. Councilmember Hussain supported continued Committee meetings on the topic, and continued presence of Mr. Baltimore at the site, which appears to be empowering.

The residents confirmed that meetings on site would be encouraging.

Councilmember Hussain asked if the LHC can place the Executive Director on site of one of their 5 properties so they can see the day to day events.

Ms. Page, resident on 4th floor acknowledge the efforts of Officer Arnold, but voiced concerns when he is not there. The residents need commitment, not just the statements. She also requested more cameras. Ms. Fountain clarified that she was aware that some cameras were up, just not working on the upper floors.

Ms. Page continued explaining her concerns with security at the front door, and suggested locking the first door not the lobby second door. She also made everyone aware that the heat is turned off in April, but it is still cold during that month. Ms. Page ended with her appeal that the society idea of low income housing means lower middle class, uneducated, and “different types of people”. She wanted the group to know the residents at 3200 S Washington are educated, college educated, have had long term jobs, and just since they live in public housing, does not change who they are. They are just in a situation where they can’t afford a lavish apartment. Ms. Page spoke in support of the Resident Council, and also asked for a commitment from everyone that has offered their assistance will help, and they are not just offering words.

Councilmember Dunbar encouraged everyone to put their email addresses on the sign in sheet, and the Committee will email out all the officials contacts to them.

Ms. Baines –Lake responded to earlier comments stating she would check on the issue with the drop box, research the entry way issues with security, if these situations are reported they can look at the video and report to the LPD.

Councilmember Wood stated that if the Housing Commission can supply the dead bolts, she work with organizations such as Tuesday Tool Man to see if they would perform the installation.

The Residents Council will be official September 29 and after it is official they will forward that membership to the Committee on Public Safety. The newsletters will go out and the Committee will work to get them the names of the organizations and numbers of people present who have offered their help.

Councilmember Wood stated the next meeting on the subject will be in November at the community room at 3200 S. Washington.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.
Submitted by, Sherrie Boak,
Recording Secretary Lansing City Council
Approved: September 16, 2016