

JENNINGS CITY COUNCIL – JULY 25, 2016

The two thousand three hundred forty second meeting of the Jennings City Council was held on Monday, July 25, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Present were Mayor Pro Tem Dugger, and councilmembers Allan Stichnote, Miranda Jones, Yolonda Fortson, Phyllis Anderson and Nicole Cook. Councilmembers Rodney Epps and Carol Epps were absent.

The meeting began with two public hearings. The first hearing was to consider the proposed use of \$186,800 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. Director of Housing and Economic Development Kimberly Smith summarized the public hearing notice and stated that the city proposed to allocate the \$186,800 as \$156,000 for demolition of derelict properties and \$30,800 to the Home Improvement Program.

Next was a public hearing called to hear comments in favor of, or opposed to, a request for resubdivision/lot consolidation of *Part of U.S. survey 1913 twp. 46 N R7E with Part of city block 6313, City of St. Louis*, as requested by Balu, Inc. at 9102 Halls Ferry Road. Gary Prosser of St. Louis County Surveying and Engineering stated that the applicant, Balu, Inc. had purchased 60 feet of right of way from MoDOT for improvements to his business. When asked what the improvements were, he replied that he had not worked on that but he believed they planned to enlarge the building and add more gasoline pumps. It was noted that the resubdivision had been recommended for approval by the Plan Commission. No one else spoke in favor of, or opposed to, the request and the public hearing was closed. Residents were then asked for their comments, and the following questions and comments were made:

What is the application process and deadline for the Home Improvement program? The program is administered by St. Louis County and applications must be obtained from them. The application is similar to a bank loan application, there is income criteria, and your taxes must be current. If approved for the loan, the resident goes on the waiting list. The loans are usually for an amount between \$4,000 and \$7,000 and the resident must stay in their home for five years for the loan to be forgiven.

When does the Home Improvement Program start? The funding being discussed tonight is for 2017 and starts on January 1, 2017.

How do you get on the waiting list? Apply and be approved.

Why is so much money designated for demolition compared to home improvement? Jennings has many houses that need to be demolished because they are a safety hazard. This is the only funding available to us for demolition.

Jennings should bring back the dollar home program, to encourage more home ownership and less rental property.

Demolition will result in more empty lots, which is also bad for the community. What will the city do with the empty lots? The houses being demolished are privately owned, and after the house is demolished, the lot still belongs to the homeowner. We are able to demolish the house because it is a danger to others, and liens are placed on the property for the cost of the demolition, but the city does not get control or ownership of the lot.

If the city has approximately 150 houses that need to be demolished, and demolishes 16 houses per year, it will take nine to ten years to demolish the houses that are currently on the list. Instead of hiring a Director of Public Safety, the city should hire another inspector so that code enforcement can be improved to keep houses from becoming derelict. Residents should also get in touch with legislators to encourage laws that are more helpful in addressing problem properties.

The CDBG public hearing was then closed and the next public hearing opened, regarding a request for a lot consolidation/resubdivision. The request was made by Balu, Inc. of 9102 Halls Ferry Road for consolidation of *Part of U.S. survey 1913 Twp 46 N R7E with Part of city block 6313, City of St. Louis*. Gary Ploesser of St. Louis County Surveying and Engineering, Inc. spoke on behalf of Balu, Inc., noting that Balu, Inc. had purchased 60 feet of right-of-way from MoDOT for improvements to their current business location. When asked what the improvements were, Mr. Ploesser stated that he had not worked on that but believed that they include enlarging the convenience store and adding more gasoline pumps. It was noted that the request had received a recommendation for approval from the Plan Commission. No one else spoke in favor of, or opposed to, the request, and the public hearing was closed.

The regular meeting was called to order and Mayor Pro Tem Dugger asked for a moment of silence for the fallen officers who had died in the line of duty recently, and for their families.

The agenda was approved on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilman Stichnote.

Approval of the minutes of the meetings of June 27, July 11 and July 14, 2016 was postponed for several corrections to be made, on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

The meeting was then opened to the public. Pat Kelly, Executive Director of the Municipal League of Metro St. Louis, spoke to the council about training available to the council and staff. He stressed the importance of using Robert's Rules of Order and following proper procedures such as having speakers from the audience come to the microphone and state their name and address. He also recommended that the city consider hiring a city administrator and suggested that the city license landlords as other cities have.

Mayor Pro Tem Dugger reminded residents of the three minute limit for public comment and of the decorum ordinance that was distributed prior to the meeting.

Robert Cotton of 7119 Garesche asked if licensing of landlords would also apply to apartments. He asked about a letter recently mailed to residents about a sewer and water line repair program being offered in conjunction with the National League of Cities. He asked why the city's logo was on the letter and stated that the man who presented the program to the city council did not mention that there was a cap on payment of \$3,500. Mayor Pro Tem Dugger noted that the council did agree to allow the company to offer the program in Jennings, but did not agree to let them use our logo. She stated that she will have the city attorney look into the matter.

Allen McDonnell of 9314 Scottdale apologized for any times he may have violated the decorum ordinance at previous meetings, and stated that the council should also have more decorum. He stated that he had written the city attorney a letter concerning what he believed to be a violation of Jennings code section 2.83 regarding a vote by the Mayor to break a tie when the Mayor is an interested party, in reference to an election to fill the vacant position of Mayor. City Attorney Carla Allen stated that she had addressed it and did not believe that Mayor Pro Tem Dugger was an interested party in that case. Mr. McDonnell stated that he may take his complaint higher.

Percillia Jones of 5516 Janet thanked the St. Louis County Police, Captain Cox, officer Trevor Voss, Bill Kaeshamer and the Public Works employees and the Neighborhood Watch members for their help with the block party on July 21st. She also thanked Roper's Ribs and the councilmembers who attended. She stated that the city just got rid of negativity in office and that there should not be bullying or harassment of employees. She encouraged city councilmembers to be informed ahead of the meetings and be available to the residents. She also stated that she would run for Mayor.

Yolonda Austin of 2483 Alexandria Place, on behalf of Top Ladies of Distinction, presented a plaque to the city and the Recreation Department for partnering with them for the last four years to offer opportunities to youth.

Charlotta Williams of 1815 Grape spoke about the city's senior program. She stated that the program was going down the drain slowly. She objected to cancelling the local bus that takes residents to the grocery store and bank so that it can be used to go to the casino. She asked for a meeting with Recreation Director Nicole Gregory to discuss the senior program. Mayor Pro Tem Dugger acknowledged her request for a meeting.

Next were councilmember's reports. Mayor Pro Tem Dugger stated that she had spoken to residents regarding the grass cutting problems, and noted that the River Roads site was being cut regularly. She thanked the St. Louis County Police for responding to complaints regarding derelict vehicles and thanked Public Works for signs placed in Alexandria Place to help deal with a speeding problem. She noted that some businesses have plans to expand, and spoke about the fund raising by the Kiwanis at the concerts in the park.

Councilwoman Fortson noted attending the citizen appreciation luncheon given by the St. Louis County Police, three senior trips, Coffee with the Commander, a ride-along with the police and an inspector, the Neighborhood Watch Block Party, concerts in the park and a Unity Fest in Dellwood. She also spoke about planning a Ward 2 clean-up.

Councilwoman Anderson reported receiving calls about streets needing attention and thanked Public Works. She attended the Block Party, Coffee with the Commander, a meeting at STAR Residences regarding programs offered by them, and holding a Ward 3 meeting with the Community Action Agency

as the guest speaker. The next Ward 3 meeting will be August 17th. She offered flyers for Family fun on the Farm Day and suggested holding a community bingo.

Councilwoman Cook reported receiving three calls this month regarding yards on Theodore that need to be cleaned up, and stated that she hoped to see streets paved instead of patched.

Councilman Stichnote reminded residents to check on their neighbors in the heat, noting that an 82 year old resident asked him for help with her air conditioner and it was 86 degrees in her house. He reported that complaints about property maintenance at three houses on High Ridge had been addressed, and Noted that restrooms at Koenemen Park that had been vandalized would be repaired in the next 30-days.

Councilwoman Jones stated that the councilmembers were doing a great job. She stated that residents had been having a hard time contacting her because of being given a wrong phone number, but that the problem has been corrected, as has the problem with her city email account. She stated that she was sorry she could not attend the Neighborhood Watch Block Party and thanked Neighborhood Watch for doing a great job. She stated that she hopes our police officers know how much we appreciate them. She announced a Ward 1 meeting for August 30th and asked that Captain Cox and other officers attend, along with Percillia Jones for Neighborhood Watch. She stated that she appreciated the suggestion from the Municipal League about a city administrator and suggested that the city council have a work session about it.

Next were department reports. Recreation Director Nicole Gregory reported that they were bringing back the city-wide yard sale on September 10th, and that they were having a three-on-three basketball tournament on September 2nd and 3rd. She plans a kid's fun day, a meeting with the senior citizens and a fall festival. The department will also participate in the Back to School Jamboree. Councilwoman Jones suggested that this information be added to her monthly report along with the income information.

For the economic development report, Councilwoman Jones asked what was going on with Target. Director of Housing and Economic Development Kimberly Smith stated that she had talked to Target's Government Affairs Office and they told her that store closings were based on performance. Ms. Smith also noted that the Building Department had been kept busy with grass complaints but that they were making progress. Ms. Smith also stated that she had been working on the CDBG funding, and that the new O'Reilly Auto Parts and Ruler Foods were moving forward. Davita Dialysis is under construction, and Regions Bank is being demolished so that a new building can be built. Councilwoman Jones asked that dead raccoons be removed from the street near White Castle.

Finance Director Beverly Roche spoke about the revenue report, noting that some sales tax is diverted to the TIF accounts. She noted that the increase this year in the Police and Firemen's Pension Fund collection is due to the tax increase approved by the voters last year. She also stated that the sewer later fee was approved to be \$28 per year but that we were only charging \$18 per year at this time because the fund is solvent.

Monthly department reports (minus the City Clerk's office report, not included) were approved on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

Reporting for their committees, Mayor Pro Tem Dugger reported that Ways and Means met earlier in the evening and been given information about payment of invoices and variance reports. She thanked Deputy City Clerk Rise' Johnson for her presentation. She also reported on a request from the Building Department to add the permit module of the MyGov software; if the software is being purchased, the funds will come from capital improvement, if the city will not own the software the funds will come from general revenue. The addition of the permit software was approved on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

Councilwoman Fortson reported that the Public Works Committee met on July 11th. The committee recommended approval of the ordinance regulating dumpsters and pods. The committee also discussed the grass cutting situation and the suggestion that Public Works use a growth retardant on vacant city and county owned properties. It was noted that this product is not hazardous. This suggestion was approved on a motion by Councilwoman Cook, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

Councilwoman Cook reported that the Building Committee met on July 6th and discussed maintenance and improvements needed at the Civic Center. Cost estimates will be obtained for a new awning with the name of the building on the awning.

Councilwoman Jones reported that the Park Committee met earlier in the evening and discussed the progress of the improvements to Lions Park funded with the Municipal Park Grant. It was noted that the project was behind schedule and that work should begin in early fall. Also discussed was vandalism to the bathrooms at Koeneman Park and the need for more lighting at the pavilion. The park budget will be discussed at the next meeting.

For the Municipal League, it was noted that the annual conference would be held in St. Louis in September.

For the Plan Commission, Mayor Pro Tem Dugger reported that the Plan Commission did recommend approval of the lot consolidation coming up on the agenda.

Mayor Pro Tem Dugger also reported that the city newsletter will be issued again. Her plan is to mail the first copy to all residents and let them know that future copies will be available online or can be picked up at City Hall.

Next was legal business. Bill #2461, regulating dumpsters and pods in residential areas, was given its first reading on a motion by Councilwoman Fortson, second by Councilwoman Jones. The second reading was done on a motion by Councilwoman Fortson, second by Councilwoman Jones. The bill was approved to become Ordinance #2409 by the following roll call vote: voting in favor were Councilmembers Stichnote, Jones, Dugger, Fortson, Anderson and Cook, no one voting against or abstaining.

Bill #2462, readopting a conflict of interest policy, was given its first reading on a motion by Councilwoman Dugger, second by Councilwoman Fortson. The second reading was done on a motion by Councilwoman Dugger, second by Councilwoman Jones. The bill was approved to become Ordinance #2410 by the following roll call vote: voting in favor were Councilmembers Stichnote, Jones, Dugger, Fortson, Anderson and Cook, no one voting against or abstaining.

Bill #2463, consolidating part of U.S. survey 1913 Twp 46 N R7E with part of city block 6313, City of St. Louis, was given its first reading on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson. The second reading was done on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson. The bill was approved to become Ordinance #2411 by the following roll call vote: voting in favor were Councilmembers Jones, Dugger, Fortson, Anderson and Cook; no one voting against, Councilman Stichnote abstaining.

Under new business, the council approved a proposed policy for the use of budgeted ward funds on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

Bills as submitted were approved for payment on a motion by Councilwoman Jones, second by Councilman Stichnote.

For the Mayor's report, Mayor Pro Tem Dugger spoke about positive communication with department heads regarding the goal of improving the quality of life in Jennings. She stated that employees had told her that they appreciate her hearing their concerns. She plans to start meeting with residents at Tea Time with the Mayor, with the first one to be held on August 3rd. She said that the future looks bright and she will report on training and grant opportunities and welcomed resident's participation. She asked residents to spread the good news about Jennings. Councilwoman Jones stated that Jennings was doing a progressive thing by settling a lawsuit regarding court matters and that the majority of the cost would be paid by insurance.

On a motion by Councilman Stichnote, second by Councilwoman Jones, a closed session will be held for personnel matters (RSMO 610:021 – 3 & 13). This was approved by the following roll call vote: voting in favor were Councilmembers Stichnote, Jones, Dugger, Fortson, Anderson and Cook; no one voting against or abstaining.

After a brief recces the council met in closed session and discussed personnel matters and changes in procedures in the jail. They also discussed implementing an employee evaluation program. The meeting was then adjourned on a motion by Councilwoman Cook, second by Councilwoman Fortson.

Mayor Pro Tem Francine Dugger

ATTEST:

City Clerk