



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

DAWN M. JONES, CITY CLERK

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

JUNE 7, 2023, 5:30 P.M.

Committee Members Present: Karen L. White, Sheila Niezgodski, Amika Micou, Lakeyue Williams

Committee Members Absent: Canneth Lee, Henry Davis Jr.

Others Present: Dawn Jones, Victoria Trujillo, Bob Palmer

Agenda: Standing Committee Meeting

Please note the attached link for the meeting recording:

<https://docs.southbendin.gov/WebLink/browse.aspx?dbid=0&mediaid=377076>

Committee Chair Karen White called the Residential Neighborhoods Committee meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Introductions

Citizen Member Lakeyue Williams introduced herself and noted her interest in becoming involved in action-oriented initiatives and organizations that are focused on community issues such as affordable housing, quality neighborhoods and education.

Citizen Member Amika Micou stated that participating in the Residential Neighborhoods Committee allows her to give back and learn more about the city's neighborhoods.

Review of the 2022 Committee Annual Report

Committee Chair White informed the Committee that the 2022 Committee report was emailed to them. She outlined the standing committee structure and advised that each committee must submit a report outlining its activities and recommendations each year. These reports are available to the public. The Residential Neighborhoods Committee continues to move strategically to address priorities that were identified in 2019 and delayed due to the pandemic. The report of the Residential Neighborhoods Committee received positive feedback.

Committee Member Sheila Niezgodski noted that the 2019 community engagement sessions were held in different areas of the city and were well attended. Common themes emerged across neighborhoods and strategic areas were identified including economic development, affordable housing, inclusion, youth engagement, public safety, and education. Action plans were created including recommendations for next steps to support the growth and evolution of neighborhoods.

There is a desire for citizens to have a quality of life that allows them to be productive, feel safe in their neighborhoods, have access to education and have their basic needs fulfilled. The Residential

Neighborhoods Committee would like to learn more about the progress made by the city during the pandemic in these key areas.

Status of Quality-of-Life Ordinance Review

Committee Chair White reported that the Residential Neighborhood Committee identified a review of quality-of-life ordinances as a major issue to address.

Regarding the meaning of the phrase “quality of life”, Citizen Member Williams noted that City ordinances should encourage and support quality of life at all stages of a person’s life from birth to death, including basic needs, housing, education, and employment. She noted the importance of regional partnerships (e.g., between neighborhoods, schools, green spaces, parks, and employment) in facilitating a high quality of life.

Citizen Member Micou suggested that neighborhoods should support people “not just to survive but to thrive.” This would include beautification to foster pride in neighborhoods, make them more livable, and build a sense of community and purpose within neighborhoods.

Committee Chair White emphasized the need to define what “thrive” means and to identify the city’s role in fostering a better quality of life. City ordinances are critical to support efforts to address quality-of-life issues and to encourage citizens to make a difference.

Issues such as people leaving garbage cans on the curb, potholes, access in alleyways and streetlights, and neighborhood beautification are important to residents. Illegal dumping of tires and household goods is also a big issue, especially in some neighborhoods. She also noted that citizens do not always have a full understanding of the role of council members in addressing issues in their neighborhoods. It should be easy for residents to report issues and receive reliable information about how to address an issue or determine when someone will be available to help them address it. It was noted that 311 is not always an effective tool for residents. This is possibly due to a lack of resources in other departments to take timely action when issues are identified. Illegal dumping and parking on lawns are the first two issues that the Committee will address.

Illegal Dumping

It was suggested that the Committee review the ordinances related to illegal dumping. Elements to be considered include how ordinances can be used to help residents and improve quality of life, prevention, enforcement, ensuring that those responsible for dumping are required to clean it up, and identifying ways to encourage residents to act responsibly. The review process should begin with the development of a methodology to review and evaluate the ordinances (e.g., evaluate their effectiveness, identify areas where the law has changed, and consider enforcement and prevention mechanisms). After a methodology has been developed, the committee can engage with community associations for feedback, followed by modification of the ordinances, including a legal and administrative review. It was noted that the relationship between local ordinances and federal and state legislation also needs to be considered. For example, ordinances should be written so that they do not need to be updated every time federal or state legislation is changed. It is also important to consider the council’s expectations regarding ordinances.

Parking on Lawns



The number of incidents of residents parking on lawns has increased and become an issue that requires action. Enforcement issues, difficulties in accessing alleyways behind homes, and a lack of parking spaces in neighborhoods were noted as issues contributing to this problem.

Committee Priorities for 2023-2024

Committee member Niezgodski agreed to prepare a list of suggestions regarding the preferred priorities and goals of the Residential Neighborhoods Committee and send it to the Chair by email.

Committee Chair White reported that guests could be invited to speak to the committee regarding issues or priorities of interest.

Walking Tours/Community Engagement

Committee Chair White agreed to conduct a series of walking tours to facilitate community engagement and to learn about the needs and priorities of different neighborhoods. Bus tours have been held in the past but current challenges in procuring buses have been noted. Committee members were asked to provide feedback to the Committee Chair regarding the potential effectiveness of walking tours and suggestions for the best areas in which to begin the tours. Additional input will be requested from the district to help identify walking areas. A walking tour schedule would be developed and posted prior to the beginning of the tours.

Budget Priorities for 2024

The Residential Neighborhoods Committee will be submitting its priorities for inclusion in the 2024 budget. Committee members agreed to share their priorities with the Chair by email. Committee Chair White mentioned several useful documents on financial empowerment, geographical data on the wealth divide and the comprehensive plan available to the Committee and contain a range of useful information and data for the Committee’s consideration. It was noted that the Residential Neighborhood Committee is also involved with the Youth Advisory Committee and the Not in Our Community Committee.

Committee Chair White also recommended a review of the Committee’s mandate. The mandate is outdated and uses language that no longer reflects the role of the Committee (e.g., the Committee’s role is no longer to “oversee” neighborhood development and enhancement). Mr. Palmer pointed out that a review of Chapter 2 of the municipal code is underway and will be addressing the ongoing validity of the standing committees.

Adjournment

In closing, Committee members expressed their excitement related to the Committee’s work and engagement with communities, their anticipation that the Committee’s work will lead to a better understanding of and support for residential neighborhoods, and their belief that a strengths-based and solutions-oriented approach can make lasting change in building great neighborhoods and creating outcomes that can be monitored and consistently improved.

With no further business, Committee Chair White adjourned the Residential Neighborhoods Committee meeting at 6:28 p.m.



Respectfully Submitted,

Karen White

Karen White, Committee Chair

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