



City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
53202

Meeting Minutes ANTI-GRAFFITI POLICY COMMITTEE

ALD. TONY ZIELINSKI, CHAIR

Ald. Robert Donovan, Vice-Chair

**Ald. Terry Witkowski, Michael Miller, Reggie Moore, and Dave
Rotter**

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Wednesday, May 5, 2010

10:30 AM

Room 301-A, City Hall

Meeting convened: 10:35 A.M.

Present 4 - Donovan, VACANCY, Rotter and Moore

Excused 2 - Witkowski and Zielinski

1. Review and approval of the minutes of the March 1st meeting

Mr. Rotter moved for approval of the minutes. There were no objections.

Roll call taken at 10:43 A.M.

Present 5 - Donovan, Zielinski, VACANCY, Rotter and Moore

Excused 1 - Witkowski

Roll call taken at 11:01 A.M.

Present 6 - Donovan, Witkowski, Zielinski, VACANCY, Rotter and Moore

2. Department of Neighborhood Services Update

Ms. Sharon Blando and Ms. Melissa O'Neil appeared for the department. Ms. Blando noted that 2009 was the worst year for graffiti, but this year there has been additional money for graffiti removal. Departments are also working in cooperation, which has resulted in fewer incidents of reported graffiti. The city has been doing more proactive cleanups, particularly on the south side and has been working with neighborhood associations and volunteers to remove graffiti in a timely manner.

The arrest of the graffiti taggers who came from Illinois has gotten a lot of attention among the taggers. Their court date is Monday, June 7th. The city did ask for \$1,150 in restitution and the damages came to over \$2,500, so the taggers were

charged with a felony. Ald. Donovan moved that the AGPC send a letter to Judge Triggiano in support of strict sentencing of these vandals. There were no objections. Mr. Rotter said that he's noted that many individuals do not pay the restitution ordered by the court. The city does have a parental responsibility ordinance, of which certain criteria must be met, in order to hold the parent responsible.

The Department of Public Works owns some cameras, which have been loaned temporarily to the Police Department, for graffiti hotspots. The cameras might also be responsible for the decrease in graffiti incidents. Having a police officer dedicated to graffiti incidents has worked well with the Dept. of Neighborhood Services.

The Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) is doing more graffiti clean-up efforts, including in the Miller Park area. The next Miller Park clean-up will be on May 23rd in cooperation with a radio station. The radio station will provide coupons to local attractions, brats and soda for volunteers. DNS would need 50-100 volunteers to clean up the area, which has a lot of graffiti on railroad bridges. Neighborhood Improvement Project does need additional funds for their cleanups, which they coordinate with DNS on a weekly basis.

The department offers an optional sign stating that a business is a member of the Milwaukee Responsible Retailer Program relating to sale of spray paint and etching materials to minors. The department is also considering purchasing a portable steam cleaner, which would cost \$2,000. A testing of the product will be done this month to see how effective it is at removing graffiti on garbage and recycling carts. A number of individuals will be invited to this demonstration, including all AGPC members.

Dave Rotter, owner of Ace Hardware, will be providing four different sealants to test on a building to see which sealants are most resistant to graffiti and easiest to clean up. This will let the city have a building that they can refer callers to see how the sealants actually perform and age. Ms. Blando also provided information on a class taught on taggers and the graffiti culture - the total cost would be \$2,000 to pay for the instructor's airfare and expenses. If the money is approved, the class will be held on Thursday, July 8th.

The reinspection fees have increased - it's now the cost of abatement and an additional \$110, which is an increase of \$60. Ald. Donovan said that he feels this cost increase is an unfair burden to senior citizens and businesses. Per Ms. Blando, the additional \$60 is to cover administrative costs to the department. Ald. Zielinski feels that the problem is that the judges do not punish the graffiti vandals - they tend to stay the jail time and set minimum restitution amounts. The administrative/reinspection costs only serve to punish the property owners, while the judges allow the vandals to walk away with minimum punishment. Mr. Miller was concerned with the new fees as well.

3. Appearance by Canadian Pacific Railway personnel relating to graffiti-removal efforts on railroad tracks, box cars, equipment and infrastructure.

Steve Rhode, Canadian Pacific Railroad Police, appeared at the table. He thanked the city for its assistance in graffiti abatement on railroad property. Ms. Blando contacts the railroad about new graffiti and the railroad removes it as quickly as possible. The railroad does have a few cameras. Ms. Blando said that the railroad is very proactive in removing graffiti and if something is not on their property, they let the city know immediately. Mr Rhode also finds that restitution funds are slow in coming to the railroad.

Mr. Maurice Williams, from the 30th Street Corridor business improvement district, did a walk-through of the railroad property within the corridor and he was told that it would be \$10,000 just for cover-up. Although other areas have improved, the railroad property continues to be a problem for the area. He thinks that there needs to be cooperation with the railroad and the community groups in the area. The railroad needs to respond quickly in order to remove graffiti and possibly utilize mobile cameras, according to Mr. Williams. He will meet with Michael Miller about key players in the area to coordinate efforts relating to graffiti.

4. Appearance by Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful relating to its anti-graffiti efforts and the 2011 Spring Kick-Off.

Joe Wilson, Executive Director of Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful at the table. He commended DNS on its graffiti-removal work. He thinks that city departments and neighborhood groups working together are doing a great job. For 2011, the present commercials need to continue relating to public education efforts and he would like to create talking posters. He and Ms. Blando will be applying for grants to pay for these talking posters. He sees the definite need for more commercials aimed at the target audience, as well as to create Facebook pages and Twitter pages and monitor these sites as well. Ms. Blando, Dept. of Neighborhood Services, will report at the next meeting about her experience with Facebook and Twitter.

5. Police Department Update

Officer Kupsik has had a lot of success with the cameras loaned from the Dept. of Public Works. There are numerous deployment options - either covertly or overtly and they do act as deterrents. He thinks that the class mentioned by Ms. Blado under item #2 might be helpful to the city's anti-graffiti efforts. The next agenda may include highlights from the class. Officer Kupsik notes that the camera resolution is excellent - it takes still photos rather than video, but does have zoom capabilities. The cameras are also used for illegal dumping. Paul Novotny, Department of Public Works, said that the cameras were originally used as a deterrent, but with the new cameras and their resolution, they can be used to identify people for arrests. The Department of Public Works physically hangs the cameras.

Roll call taken at 11:54 A.M.

Present 5 - Witkowski, Zielinski, VACANCY, Rotter and Moore

Excused 1 - Donovan

6. Municipal Court Update

Ms. Kristine Hinrichs had provided members with data relating to graffiti cases at Municipal Court - there were only 4 cases filed, all involving juveniles and vandalism.

7. Department of Public Works Update

Paul Novotny, Dept. of Public Works, noted that the department isn't doing any sweep cleanups as they're temporarily short-staffed. They do have approval to hire two temporary individuals. Two individuals are out full time doing graffiti removal.

The east side, particularly around UW-Milwaukee, is getting hit hard and Bay View as well, with small tags.

8. District Attorney's Office Update on the status of graffiti cases

Jacob Manian appeared and noted that the graffiti taggers will be sentenced on June 10th - they were charged with 8 misdemeanors. No individual damage amounts were enough to meet felony requirements. He typically recommends jail time for graffiti offenses, but sentencing recommendations also depend on the degree of culpability and the number of previous offenses. He will meet with Ald. Zielinski and the Ms. Blando to discuss specific cases.

9. Milwaukee Christian Center Update

Michael Van Alstine and Roger Aponte appearing for the Milwaukee Christian Center and Neighborhood Improvement Project. Mr. Van Alstine apologized for not being present at the last meeting. He provided data from 2009 and the first quarter of 2010 (attached). Their organization does work for community organizations and private businesses and does graffiti removal at the request of the Dept. of Neighborhood Services. The Milwaukee Christian Center does graffiti removal using block grant funds as well as getting money from private individuals and businesses. They do add an extra crew in summer using youth paid for with block grant funds and their own funds. Typically the youth workers remove graffiti in alley on garages and fences. The Milwaukee Christian Center is seeking more block grant funds to continue its graffiti removal efforts.

10. Update from business improvement districts related to their graffiti levels and graffiti removal efforts

Caroline Phoenix, King Drive Business Improvement District, notes that the district is usually able to remove graffiti within 24 hours. She would like to be present for the steamcleaner demonstration.

11. Update from private entities receiving city funds for anti-graffiti efforts

Maria Sandoval, Safe and Sound, said that Operation Payback with police districts 2 and 5, resulted in 226 instances of graffiti removed, with a total of 1,770 square feet. The bulk of the graffiti is taggings on street signs, bus stops, and other public infrastructure. Mr. Aaron Edwards, Safe and Sound, noted that with Operation Payback they're also trying to get job and education opportunities for offenders to integrate them back into the community. The south side is the biggest area for graffiti incidents according to Mr. Edwards. Anti-graffiti efforts are also coordinated with neighborhood cleanups and getting residents involved in the solution. They are rotating cleanups at different south side parks in order to get all residents involved.

12. Set next meeting date and agenda

July 26th at 10:30 A.M.

*Meeting adjourned: 12:16 P.M.
Linda M. Elmer*

Staff Assistant