



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 and Michael Miller

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Monday, September 15, 2008

10:30 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

Meeting convened: 10:51 A.M.

Present 3 - Donovan, Witkowski and Zielinski

1. Roll Call

2. Approval of the minutes of the November 26, 2007 meeting

Ald. Witkowski moved for approval of the minutes. There were no objections.

3. Communication from the Benedict Center related to its graffiti removal program

Individuals present:

Tom Mishefske and Sharon Blando

The individual, Rupert St. Julian, from the Benedict Center could not attend due to a crisis they had to respond to, but they did prepare a statement for Ms. Blando to read. Last year, the Center cleaned up 1,000 city garbage carts and 2,000 garbage cans since March of this year. The Center uses incarcerated offenders to remove graffiti with 6 people working twice a week and removing graffiti for 3 hours at one time (Exhibit 1). Contact information for Mr. Julian was provided to members who might have graffiti in their districts. The offenders like the program as they need to complete their service hours and their work is excellent. The Benedict Center performs work for Habitat for Humanity, the Salvation Army and the Wisconsin Humane Society. Graffiti is removed with a spray and the Dept. of Neighborhood Services supplies the workers with needed supplies.

4. Department of Neighborhood Services update

Individuals present:

Tom Mishefske and Sharon Blando

The department provided updated statistics by Ms. Blando (Exhibit 2) and noted the graffiti incidents have increased about 20% for 2006-2008 from 2003-2005. She also provided a letter from a Milwaukee resident related to graffiti in his neighborhood (Exhibit 3). Ms. Blando said that the Target Corporation is giving the city a \$1,500 grant to apply to the graffiti program. Twelve Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) have asked for money to match their graffiti-removal funds. The total of the bids came to \$23,500. Chris Grant, from Riverworks BIDs #25 and #36, came to the table and said that his BID districts have had quite a bit of graffiti this summer and have already depleted their funds for this effort. His group appreciates the matching city funds and uses these funds; the graffiti is often the same that they are continually painting over. As far as he knows, no-one has been apprehended related to this graffiti.

Ms. Blando noted that sexually offensive graffiti is also appearing on the sidewalks and on the streets, but not on buildings, and that is a top priority for removal by the department. Ms. Blando said that the city is fairly stable in terms of graffiti occurrences and the department seems to be able to stay on top of it.

Rosemary, a volunteer graffiti-remover who lives around Kinnickinnic and Bay Street, came to the table to speak to committee members. She noted graffiti as she was walking her dog and was concerned about the graffiti. Business owners have told her that they are appreciative of her efforts.

Ms. Blando provided color copies of murals within neighborhoods. The concern is that although these murals aren't graffitied, they attract graffiti offenders to neighborhoods, who then mark other buildings. The department has been receiving many calls from people who are unhappy about these murals. Ms. Blando has contacted the City Attorney's Office to get a legal opinion on what is considered a "sign" vs. a "mural".

Ald. Zielinski is also looking at local legislation, which he hopes to introduce on September 16th. South 2nd Street is particularly heavily tagged, possibly due to the mural at 707 S. 2nd St.

Ms. Blando have provided anti-graffiti hotline statistics and a synopsis of the department's graffiti program earlier (Exhibit 5)

5. Department of Public Works update

Paul Novotny noted that the department has a dedicated van for graffiti removal, which was temporarily disabled, but now is back in operation. The department provides support to the police department and the department of neighborhood services as requested. The department is getting calls about the same hot spots (Riverwest, the area up to UW-Milwaukee, near south side and the south side) as the department of neighborhood services is receiving. The department is seeing more gang-related street displays (painting of the actual pavement), which is a priority for the department to remove.

6. Milwaukee Christian Center update.

No-one was present from the Milwaukee Christian Center.

7. Municipal Court update.

Kristine Hinrichs had provided a report earlier from the Municipal Court (Exhibit 6). There have been a few cases related to possession of graffiti tools and 15 cases involving individuals performing graffiti acts.

8. Milwaukee Police Department update.

No-one was present from the Milwaukee Police Department.

9. Review and approval of the 2005, 2006 and 2007 annual reports.

Ald. Donovan moved for approval of the annual reports. There were no objections.

10. Public comments

Ms. Sarah Dollhausen from True Skool, Inc. appeared regarding the association of her organization with certain murals that might be perceived as graffiti. She said True Skool worked closely with City staff, particularly building inspection, to secure necessary approvals before proceeding. She said the public support for the mural on S. 12th St. has been very high and her organization has received requests for murals at other locations.

Ms. Dollhausen said some officials have perceived the work of her organization as

graffiti and she has on occasion encountered disagreements over what constitutes art, beautification or graffiti. She said her organization does try to inform young people about the consequences of tagging as opposed to creating graffiti as art. Ald. Zielinski praised Ms. Dollhausen's organization for working within the law and the City's bureaucracy as well as encouraging young people to pursue positive artistic activities. Mr. Miller asked if the graffiti artists would be willing to alter their works if property owners did not like them, and Ms. Dollhausen indicated that they would.

11. Set next meeting date

Next meeting set for Monday, January 12, 2009 at 10:30 a.m.

Meeting adjourned: 11:41 A.M.

Linda M. Elmer, Staff Assistant

Jim Owczarski, Deputy City Clerk

This meeting can be viewed in its entirety in the web-casting archives found at www.milwaukee.gov/channel25.