



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, and Angelique Pettigrew

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Monday, July 27, 2009

10:30 AM

Room 301-B, City Hall

Meeting convened: 10:43 A.M.

Present 5 - Donovan, Witkowski, Zielinski, Miller and VACANT2

Excused 1 - Pettigrew

1. Review and approval of the minutes of the May 21, 2009 meeting

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

2. Department of Neighborhood Services update

Ms. Sharon Blando, Dept. of Neighborhood Services, noted that graffiti is up across the city (Exhibits 1 and 2) and on the south side a number of taggers are just using initials as graffiti and are tagging numerous items, including trees. Taggers are also beginning to tag private vehicles and using both markers and spray paint. Well-known taggers are also beginning to tag on the second floor. An example of this was provided by Ms. Blando (Exhibit 3). The owner of this property is also upset that the property owner is responsible for removal at her or his own cost. The public art in the Park East freeway area will also be monitored for graffiti because this is an area which does have graffiti (Exhibit 4)

Tru Skool has also done a permission wall on the south side and that has remained graffiti-free so far (Exhibit 5). Mexican Posse (MP13) has a number of tags on the south side. The Dept. of Neighborhood Services has also revamped its graffiti-removal system and is now current, rather than dealing with a backlog of graffiti. A number of garbage carts have been cleaned up both by contractors and by the city. The city has talked with Waste Management related to graffiti on its property and a new reporting system was instituted, which is hoped will result in quicker clean-up.

The Police Dept. is still using offenders as part of its "Operation Payback Program" Offenders who go through this program are not reoffending, which saves the city money.

Janice Guetschidjia, a neighbor volunteer, came before the Committee. She noted that the areas that she cleaned have stayed cleaned so far, so she encourages others to volunteer to remove graffiti.

Ms. Blando provided members with information from the department newsletter related to the graffiti tagger who received jail time and a fine (Exhibit 6). Ald. Donovan expressed concern about the lack of color-match by graffiti removal staff. Ms. Blando noted that crews have seven colors to choose from and she encourages them to match colors as much as they can.

Ms. Blando read the apology of Michael Brown, who was present in the audience, and arrested for graffiti vandalism. Mr. Brown came to the table and answered questions from the committee. He is currently, along with his mother and older brother, removing graffiti.

Mr. Miller noted that the city distributes millions of dollars in community block grants related to graffiti, but he isn't hearing graffiti being discussed among these funded bodies, churches or out in the community. He would like the Department to meet with the Community Block Grant office and churches to get the anti-graffiti message out. Ms. Blando provided the committee with letters from Ald. Witkowski, National Ace Hardware and John Chisholm related to graffiti (Exhibit 7)

Ald. Witkowski encouraged members to hold a press conference noting that graffiti is the worst in eight years and is particularly hard during these tough budget times for the city and for citizens to continually clean up.

3. Representatives from West Allis speaking on their experiences using cameras borrowed from the City

Representatives were not present.

4. Department of Public Works update

Mr. Richard Lacy appeared for the department, which continues to provide support to both the police and neighborhood services. The trip-wire cameras take pictures as soon as someone enters into a 160' area - the dept. created camouflage for those cameras (a converted garbage can and a smoke stack that fits on a flat roof). The department also uses digital cameras, which help decrease in graffiti in the areas where the cameras are deployed. The Dept. has one vehicle and one two-man crew which responds to graffiti complaints. He provided a list of "graffiti hot spots" (Exhibit 8). There have been no arrests as a result of the digital cameras, which serve primarily as deterrents and move the graffiti to other locations.

5. Municipal Court update

Ms. Kristine Hinrichs provided members with her report (Exhibit 9) and noted that the violations that come before Municipal Court are up significantly.

6. Milwaukee Police Department update

This item was taken up out of order prior to the Municipal Court update. Captain Edward Negron said that the dept. has two pole cameras which have been used during festivals. The camera is a huge deterrent. He also stated that there have been no arrests directly related to the cameras. The department has an analyst who will be the key person to investigate graffiti groups. The police are always looking for gang-related graffiti to predict, and hopefully, avert future violence.

The parental responsibility ordinance is a good ordinance, but is very time-consuming for the pilot projects in police districts 2 and 4. Part of the problem is that the older kids are the most egregious offenders and closer to the legal age, while younger kids will be under control of their parents for a longer period of time. Many times, parents/children also move, which requires that they be tracked down. Ald. Zielinski stated that parents of the most egregious offenders need to be prosecuted and a press conference called so that other parents could be made aware of what can happen if they do not control their children.

Ald. Donovan would like a detailed report on arrests made by the dept. at the next meeting. Ald. Zilienski would like a separate press conference on the parental responsibility ordinance. Ald. Witkowski also mentioned having a press conference on the increase in graffiti vandalism.

7. Milwaukee Christian Center update

No one was present from the Center.

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

June Moberly, Avenues West Association, noted that their graffiti is about double from what it was last year. In 2008, Avenues West spent just over \$2,200 but has exceeded \$2,500 so far this year. They have little gang graffiti, but primarily taggers. Their graffiti is concentrated on 27th Street where they don't have security cameras, which are gradually being added, Clybourn Avenue and State Street. They also get very little on Wisconsin Avenue. She also noted that the paint colors are not being matched as well as had been in the past and the Milwaukee Christian Center's response has been slower than in prior years. The Association also provides graffiti-removal products to businesses that are willing to remove the graffiti themselves. Ald. Donovan noted that the city will need to encourage more residents to adopt blocks, lightpoles, signs, etc. to remove graffiti. Graffiti is not only spreading from the near north and south sides, but it is also increasing in frequency.

Judi Keller, Mitchell Street Business Association, noted that their area is seeing more graffiti and also physically higher graffiti. Ms. Keller would ask that those individuals who cover graffiti do so in more of a rectangle shape, rather than an asterisk shape. Ms. Keller would like someone from Dept. of City Development appear at this committee as a newsletter was discussing a permission wall on the south side (Exhibit 5 from today's meeting). Ms. Keller thinks that Tru Skool is promoting graffiti, rather than art. Ms. Keller is anticipating a graffiti bill for July of \$3,000. The cost for their association will be double or triple from last year.

Maurice Williams, BID #37, formerly the 30th Street Industrial Corridor, noted that the same taggers are highly mobile. He would encourage the city to work with other municipalities and create better coordination with Sanitation Services in removing graffiti and a more-timely response from the city would be appreciated. He thinks the quality of work of Milwaukee Christian Center is good, but the costs have increased astronomically, but other contractors charge even more.

9. Set next meeting date and agenda

Sept. 28th at 10:30 A.M.

The Dept. of City Development will be on the next agenda and staff invited to attend.

Meeting adjourned: 11:58 A.M.

Linda M. Elmer

Staff Assistant