

Appearance Commission Minutes Meeting on Thursday, October 11, 2012

Attendees:

Lori Wray
Jim Gargis
Collette Touchette
Melvin Caldwell
Tom Rowe
Sandra Waters

Guests:

Captain Tim Hayes

Item I: Call to Order

Chairperson, Lori Wray welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Item 2: Approval of Minutes

The minutes were approved as written.

Item 3: Old Business

A: Guest Speaker Captain Hayes

- Captain Hayes informed the Commission that a Code Enforcement Officer had been hired. Jon Raines of Newton began his duties on Wednesday, October 3. He was selected out of a field of 81 candidates. Jim comes with a background in construction, electrical work, and law enforcement.
- At this time his priorities are to address long term problems and most recent reports related to nuisances, abandoned housing, minimal housing, and non-residential structures.
- Captain Hayes stated that foreclosures are a problem
- The guideline used to condemn a property is if repairs cost less than 50% of the property value it can be repaired. If the repairs will cost more than 50% of the property value then the property will be condemned and may be demolished at City cost. A tax lien will then be put on the property to allow the city to recoup said costs.
- Captain Hayes also informed us that a new process has been approved to address ordinance infractions to speed up the process in getting the infractions cleared.
- The Code Enforcement Officer is allowed to charge the infraction owner with abatement, code enforcement, and any administrative fees required to complete the process
- When asked how the Appearance Commission could help he stated he needed our support and our help in improving the main entrance points of the city.

Action: The Commission requested that Captain Hayes come back with Mr. Raines to the Appearance Commission meeting in January or February.

B: Appearance Commission Mission Statement and Duties

- Jim Gargis, Lori Wray, Sandra Waters and Collette Touchette met to compose the “Request for City Council Action” document required to go before the City Council.
- Since we did not have a forum to obtain approval by the commission Lori will forward a copy to Alicia, Jan, and Jane.
- Once the commission approves the document and before it can be presented to City Council, Larry Pitts will need to review then Mayor Stedman will need to approve.
- Collette noted that we may want to add items #6a and #6b from the State statutes to the document.

Action: Lori Wray will forward copies of the “Request for City Council Action” document to Alicia, Jan, and Jane for their review.

C: Christmas Lights around the Square

- In November the city crews will put up the Christmas lights. The Appearance Commission will gather one night and review the lights to determine if anything needs to be changed or added.

D: Adopt-a-Spot Information for Merchants

- Still working on the Brochure

Action: Lori Wray and Alicia Rayfield will develop a draft.

E: Landscape plans behind City Hall

- The Appearance Commission is requesting that they review the landscape plans for the newly developed area for the SECU ATM machine behind City Hall.

Action: Sandra Waters will email the Commission a copy of the landscape plans for review.

F: Business Signage and Landscaping on Hwy 321 South

- Technibilt is requesting a larger sign than acceptable by code on Business Hwy 321. Jim Gargis suggested that Newton consider letting them have a larger sign as long as they provide approved landscaping at the sign and maintain the landscaping.

Action: Jim Gargis is to take the suggestion to Todd Clark.

Item 4: New/Other Business

A: Arbor Day

- Dave White asked if the Appearance Commission still wants to work with the Tree Committee on the Arbor Day Activities.

Action: This discussion will be tabled until the November meeting due to a lack of quorum.

B: Budget

Sandra Waters handed out a copy of the budget for 2012-2013 for the Commission to review. The budget for 2013-2014 will be due by February.

C: Wayfinding Committee

- Collette reported that the Wayfinding Committee met and has identified 21 directional signs, 7 gateway signs, and the important destinations for the directional signs. They are now in the phase of identifying any difficulties and road blocks. They will be meeting with DOT at their next meeting.

Action: The Commission asked that Collette find out from the DOT what we could do to improve the island at Hwys 10 and 16.

D: Grants

- Collette noted that she had obtained a list of grants from Rob Powell and forwarded a copy of that list to Lori Wray.

E: Town Landscaper – Doyle Wyatt

- Collette suggested that Mr. Wyatt would be a valuable addition to the Appearance Commission.

Action: Sandra Waters will talk to Mr. Wyatt about attending the Appearance Commission meeting on a quarterly basis.

F: Commission Workshop

- Collette suggested that we hold a separate workshop to solely discuss the activities, short term goals and long term plans for the Commission before the next budget submission. No discussion was held.

Next Meeting: November 8, 2012, 7:00pm at Zander's Coffee House