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April 12, 2010

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE**  
**ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on April 12, 2010, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen John Connolly and Maryann Heuston (appointed to the committee for this meeting only) also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Walter Pero, Dennis Sullivan and Thomas Taylor, Administrative Assistant Matt Dias, Executive Director of OSPCD Monica Lamboy, Police Chief Michael Cabral, Director of Constituent Services Steve Craig, Corey Mashburn, Women's Commission Director Sonja Darai, Director of Community Relations Carlene Campbell, Director of Health Paulette Renault Caragianes and interested members of the public.

**188794 – Baiting in Ward 3 for rodent control:**

Alderman Taylor reported that the baiting in the requested areas has been done. Ward 3 resident Mary Flannery explained how the rat problem has impacted the neighborhood discussed the costs of hiring an exterminator. Ms, Flannery stated that she has not seen any rodent problems for 6 months. Alderman Sullivan suggested that the problem could stem from the dumpsters in the area buildings and he discussed the problems in Ward 1, explaining and how the area was flyered to educate people on how to control the problem. Alderman Heuston explained how rats seek food sources, typically traveling no more than 65 feet from their nest, and she discussed things that residents could do to deter them, stressing that the food sources must be eliminated. Another resident discussed how barbeque grills and fruit trees also provide a food source for rats and raccoons, noting that it is not always trash, but other things in an urban environment. She stated that the rats are living under her asphalt and in her shed. Alderman Heuston asked when this becomes a public health issue and state laws kick in and also asked if private property owners can be compelled to bait for rats. She stated that there are local ordinances that require people to maintain their property in a certain way and said that it is the job of the city to fine people who are violating the ordinances. Alderman Heuston wants the city to come down hard on absentee landlords and she suggested putting a specialized team together to deal with the problem and requested that ISD and the Board of Health zero in on problem properties immediately. Ms. Lamboy discussed the effectiveness of ticketing and baiting and will compile all available data on rodent complaints to better pinpoint the trouble areas in the city. A resident of Ward Street stated that a church at 9 Ward Street is infested with rats and the owner is not baiting. Another resident stated that she called the city, but was told that the city would only remove a dead animal from a property. Chairman White will keep this item in committee for further study and he discussed the possibility of city inspectors obtaining administrative warrants if certain situations call for such action.

Chairman White requested that Ms. Lamboy keep the committee apprised of any action plans devised by her department in this matter.

Alderman Heuston's motion *that inspectors examine 9 Ward Street and the property on Medford Street and Somerville Avenue, from John's Auto to the used car lot, for rodent problems*, was approved.

Chairman White's motion *that the City Solicitor draft an ordinance requiring all dumpsters in the city to be child proof*, was approved.

Alderman Heuston's motion *that the Inspectional Services Department visit the Burger King on Somerville Avenue to inspect the dumpster and require them to replace it with a child proof dumpster*, was approved.

A motion by Aldermen Heuston and Sullivan *that the City Solicitor compile an informational packet regarding trash, dumpsters and the laws relative to their cleaning, upkeep of private property and state health codes to explore what other avenues may be utilized to address the rodent problem in the city*, was approved.

#### **Noise complaints at churches:**

Chief Cabral asked the committee to inform him of noise complaints from specific churches and told those present that placing calls into the police is the only way to control noise problems because the calls are kept track of and followed up. Ward Street resident Julia Simeone stated that the church on her street has been a nuisance for years, noting that she cannot hear her television and has lost 2 tenants because of the noise. Ms. Simeone continued and said that she must keep her windows closed at all times because of the noise and she can no longer deal with the yelling and screaming. Alderman Heuston spoke about measuring the decibel level and citing violations and suggested researching the use of speakers and microphones and Alderman Taylor suggested examining the noise ordinance since he feels that many patrolmen are not familiar with its provisions and limitations. Alderman Sullivan discussed noise problems in Ward 1 with boom boxes and the Latin Festival at the Holiday Inn. Chief Cabral stated that ISD has the city's only decibel meter and Chairman White requested that 2 noise meters be purchased for the Police Department and that the one that ISD has should be given to the Police Department until the 2 additional meters are purchased. Chairman White asked for statistics as to how many noise citations are issued by the police.

Alderman Heuston's motion *that the Chief of Police work with the Community Police Officer to control the noise at the church at 9 Ward Street*, was approved.

Alderman Heuston's motion *that the City Solicitor provide the Committee on Public Health and Public Safety with a report on the use and licensing of public address systems as well as the noise ordinance*, was approved.

Alderman Heuston's motion *that the Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Community Development (ISD) coordinate with the Chief of Police to inspect the property at 9 Ward Street to determine the need for a sprinkler system and to enforce any and all applicable sprinkler regulations*, was approved.

**188861 - Domestic violence policy for municipal employees:**

Ms. Dorai discussed domestic violence and its impact on job performance, state policies on domestic violence and an employee time off policy that would allow employees to use sick and vacation time to deal with domestic violence issues. Alderman Sullivan spoke about domestic abuse in the gay community and the need for a victim's support system and he would like to see city employees get paid time off if they can prove they are victims of domestic violence. Alderman Sullivan also said that there must be a climate in the city that does not tolerate domestic violence and that supports victims. Ms. Renault-Caragianes explained that this is a unique situation that must be understood in detail by the city's department heads and said that by dealing with this issue appropriately, time off may be avoided. Ms. Renault-Caragianes will work with Personnel Director Jesse Baker and Mr. Dias to have a well thought out plan in place by October, (which is Domestic Violence month).

**Regulations and enforcement regarding cleaning up after dogs (pooper scooper):**

Chairman White asked Mr. Craig if the city's 311 line receives a lot of calls regarding dog waste. It was explained that it is difficult to fine the owners of offending dogs since the animal must be caught in the act, so to speak. If an address is provided, then a notice can be sent to the resident informing him of the applicable regulations. Chairman White asked that Constituent Services follow up on the letters that are sent out. Chairman White asked Chief Cabral if police officers can deal with dog defecation issues and was told that it is mainly handled by Constituent Services. Chairman White recommended getting the Community Police Officers involved in this matter for serious violations. Chief Cabral stated that he has ordered directed patrols at Lincoln Park due to several complaints. Alderman Heuston told those present that the signage at city parks is inadequate and she believes that improved signage could help. Ms. Campbell stated that park signage was revamped by the Mayor's Office last year and was modeled after signs in Cambridge.

No papers were acted on.

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Alderman William A. White, Jr., Chairman  
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety