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September 30, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on September 30, 2009, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Member Alderman John Connolly also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Bruce Desmond and Sean O'Donovan, Administrative Assistant Matt Dias, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, Assistant City Solicitor David Shapiro, Director of Traffic and Parking James Kotzuba, Traffic Engineer Terry Smith, Arn Franzen from SPCD and interested members of the public.

187944 - 82 Pearson Avenue:

Mr. Shapiro informed the members that the owner of the property is in bankruptcy, (allowed by the court on June 17, 2009), and that the mortgagee can foreclose on the property. The five main issues with the property are overgrowth, debris, mail, vinyl siding and the building construction. Mr. Shapiro has been in communication with the owner's attorney and informed him that if these issues are not remedied within two weeks, the City will proceed with legal action. The committee requested that the city's Neighborhood Inspection Team inspect the building for any safety violations and ensure that the building is secure. Alderman Desmond asked that directed patrols be instituted in the area and also that the city be prepared to take the necessary legal action in two weeks. Chairman White stated his intention to schedule a meeting within three weeks to receive an update on the situation.

188147 – Speed Bumps:

Mr. Shapiro told the members that calls to the Federal Highway Administration were not returned and that he was unable to find any regulation against the use of speed bumps. Mr. Smith explained that there is a difference between a speed bump or table and a speed hump, noting that several courts have ruled that speed bumps have an inherent design flaw that may cause accidents to occur. Speed bumps are not designed for public ways. Speed humps, however, are acceptable on public ways, meet all necessary criteria and do not place liability on the city. The average cost of a speed hump is \$85,000 and Mr. Franzen told the members that SPCD is prepared to use funds in its budget for public safety measures, such as this. Chairman White noted that Representative Provost has a bill before the legislature to change the speed limit from 30 MPH to 25 MPH on streets where a speed limit is not posted.

187951 – Somerville Junction Park:

Chief Holloway addressed the problems at Junction Park, informing the members that young adults have been smoking marijuana in the park but that overall, the park was clean, with the exception of some empty beer containers. The DPW has been asked to close the access point to the park that has allowed vehicles to enter the area. Officers from the Police Department's Vice Unit will be assigned to patrol the area to determine what else might be transpiring at the park. Neighbors complained about dogs running loose at the park and Chief Holloway stated that he would instruct the Animal Control officers to patrol the area

and enforce the law and to issue citations for violations. Chairman White requested that police officers also issue tickets to owners who have their dogs unleashed in public. Chief Holloway suggested that residents take pictures of suspicious activity at the park with their cell phones and forward them to the Police Department.

343 Summer Street:

Mr. Shapiro updated the committee on the property at 343 Summer Street and stated that the owner would clean up the overgrowth in the next week and that the city was prepared to take the appropriate action should this not be done.

188163 – Crime Statistics:

Chief Holloway addressed the issue of crime in the city and noted that overall crime is down 22%.

Chairman White asked that the crime statistics be emailed to all Aldermen.

No papers were acted on.

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