



City Manager's Office
602 S. Main Street
Joplin, Missouri 64801
(417) 624-0820 Ext. 205
(417) 625-4707 (Fax)

TO: City Council
FROM: Sam Anselm, City Manager
DATE: August 28, 2015
RE: Weekly Update

Good afternoon, everyone. Please see below for this week's update.

Key Meetings

- On Monday, staff from HR, Parks and Recreation, and I met to discuss some possible position changes within parks and recreation due to a restructuring of the department. We will have a meeting with finance staff next week to review the financial impact of these changes, but it is my hope to have this discussion with you during our budget work sessions.
- Later that morning I attended the monthly meeting of the Joplin Area Chamber of Commerce. Following up on our meeting from Monday night, if you have not submitted your suggestions for items to include with the new contract to either City Attorney Edwards or myself, please do so at your earliest convenience.
- Monday afternoon, AtCM Kelly and I met with finance staff to review the evaluation of user fees and charges report compiled by finance in conjunction with other departments. There are a few fee requests that we need to do additional research on, but I anticipate the bulk of the fees will be ready for your review and discussion during our budget work sessions.
- On Tuesday, department heads and I met to discuss the audit findings. Specifically, we made it through the first three findings of the audit report. The website has been updated to reflect that 67.8% of insurance proceeds have been collected under the duplication of benefits provision (Recommendation 3.3). Pertaining to Recommendation 3.4, we will be retraining staff on how to locate and secure the proper suspension and debarment paperwork. Finance will now be responsible for retaining the proper documentation related to this finding.
- Later that afternoon, AtCM Kelly and I met to review his progress on developing a five-year Capital Improvement Plan for use by council and staff in planning out the next several years of capital expenditures. Work continues on that project and our hope is to have a draft document ready for your review at the budget work sessions, even though no formal action will be required by you at this time.
- On Wednesday, the Infrastructure Team (staff from public works, planning, and Deloitte) met to review their progress on mapping out the use of the CDBG-DR funds for infrastructure work in the recovery area. Based on the dollars budgeted for Infrastructure Projects #1 and #2 (but not including the Main & 20th Street road projects), PW staff is

recommending a mix of stormwater (18%), sanitary sewer (31%) and surface element (51%) repairs throughout all zones, but concentrated in the heart of the damage area based on condition assessments that took place over the past several months. Next week, the Infrastructure Team will be meeting with the engineering consultants to prepare next steps and a timeline for implementation. After those meetings take place, I will likely be asking Deloitte staff to give a presentation/update to the council and the public at a future council meeting.

- On Thursday morning I attended a meeting with several local residents who are interested in sharing more about all of the positive things going on in our community, in spite of what we read in the headlines or on Facebook. The impetus behind the meeting was a book called *For the Love of Cities*, by Peter Kageyama, whom you may recall was in Joplin in May of 2013 to talk to several residents about what we can do to show our love for the cities in which we live. The “I Am Joplin” mural on 6th and Main was the direct result of that visit. Discussions are still in the early stages, but as I learn more I’ll pass the information along.
- Later that afternoon, Director Tuttle, AtCM Kelly and I accompanied Councilmember Colbert-Kean on a tour of the city with officials from the National League of Cities. We discussed our recovery efforts and the use of various state and federal resources to help us, economic development efforts, and other topics.
- Earlier this afternoon, representatives from several departments met with the Finance Committee to answer questions related to the fee study that the finance department has completed with the help of several departments. The committee voted to advance the study to the council for review, which will also occur during budget work sessions next month. I would like to commend staff at all levels for their efforts in bringing this information to you, with a particular word of thanks to Assistant Finance Director AJ Whistler, for his efforts in researching our costs, city comparables, and compiling the report for your review.
- To end the week, I met with Callie Hudson with the Downtown Joplin Alliance. They are moving their office to 515 S. Main next week, and she also informed me of an exciting restaurant start-up/incubator opportunity that will be coming to 1st and Main, in the former Cooper’s 66 restaurant. We discussed the downtown parking proposal more, and I’ll be gathering additional information next week to share with you. Thank you to those of you who have provided input thus far; I’ll provide a summary of everyone’s responses along with additional information/answers to some of the questions you’ve raised.

Miscellaneous

Earlier this week I asked our Neighborhood Services Supervisor, Stephen Grindle, to provide an update on some of the changes taking place within the division. That report is attached to this week’s update. I am excited about the change in direction that is taking place within the division, and I think it will have some positive impacts on our community as the vision becomes a reality.

Please let me know if you have any questions about these items, otherwise, have a great weekend!

Neighborhood Services Update for the City Manager

August 28, 2015

A NEW PHILOSOPHY

The Neighborhood Services Division, once known strictly as Code Enforcement, is in the middle of a culture-shift: a move away from merely penalizing residents with a distant violation letter, towards seeing enforcement as one of many opportunities for proactive community engagement and communication amongst a suite of tools within the Division. While there are always going to be violations, and those who perpetually violate, this new approach allows for better understanding and communication as to the underlying issues that cause violations. Often times, there are community resources and organizations available to assist. In our role, we can assist in identifying and making these connections to resolve issues before they become code violations. As we continue this shift, we know that code violations are simply a symptom of a deeper issue. This is where we get to listen for the real needs/wants of our residents and we are afforded an opportunity to empower them to create the types of neighborhoods they wish to live in. We are working to see code enforcement as one of many tools under a larger umbrella of neighborhood quality of life. Quality of life issues include: safety, connection, beautification, ecology, health, economics, culture/arts, and politics. Code enforcement is really a means by which our Division engages with Joplin residents on these issues. It provides an opportunity for us to find the stakeholders of a neighborhood and empower them to become change agents in their community.

RESEARCHING A VISION

The past four months have primarily been a discovery and trial process for our team. We are currently doing two things to explore the future direction of the Neighborhood Services Division:

1. I am currently surveying the Neighborhood Services programs of 10 different cities ranging from 200,000 to 20,000 residents in order to determine what they are doing well, not so well, and how we can implement some of the best ideas into our program here in Joplin. Here are some of the early things we have identified:
 - a. **Quality of Life:** Municipalities nation-wide are deeming neighborhood vitality and quality of life for their residents as a top priority. More bike lanes, new trees and lower crime rates do not necessarily equal a higher quality of life. A study in Santa Monica, CA provided that only 56% of people said they knew someone they could count on in their neighborhood, more than 50% of people were not active every day, one in five adults said they felt lonely, and one in three adults ages 18-34 said they were stressed all or most of the time. Researchers found that the core of what creates satisfaction in people's lives are civic engagement and social cohesion. Neighborhood services is currently working on strategies in partnership with local neighborhood organizations, the faith-community and non-profits to work on these social capital issues.
 - b. **Neighborhood Entities:** Municipalities are encouraging residents to organize at two levels: 1) The neighborhood level, through some sort of association or group; 2) At the City level, through the creation of a board of neighborhood representatives from each neighborhood. These two types of entities work with government officials to enact the ideas and priorities of the neighborhoods they represent. We are taking this concept

and forming neighborhood groups; identifying individuals in each area with skills and willing to play a leadership role. I have examples of this later on to share.

- c. Aligning Neighborhood Services and Code Enforcement:** Several Neighborhood Services programs desire the opportunity to influence and set the pace of what code enforcement looks like in their cities. They believe that code enforcement, as a subset of Neighborhood Services, allows for needed cooperation between these often separated and incongruent divisions. We are taking steps to identify additional service opportunities to our code authorities. Code violations should be the avenue of last resort for many of the people we work with and types of violations we routinely address.
 - d. Listening to Needs/Wants:** Municipalities are creating “listening spaces” for their citizens through formal and informal gatherings that allow for greater connectivity between local city officials and residents. We have budgeted for a couple neighborhood engagement meetings this year in the community to listen to citizen needs. We are identifying specific targeted areas and are in discussion with other departments on best opportunities.
 - e. Grant-Giving:** Municipalities are giving small grants to neighborhood associations interested in beautifying or improving their neighborhoods. Projects ranging from \$1,000 to \$100,000 are transforming residents from passive complainers to active engagers who take pride and ownership in the places they live. Given the limited resources available to our Division, we are looking for creative ways to not only use our annual CDBG funding, but identifying resources and partners to help advance the program.
- 2.** We have been surveying residents to find out their most pressing needs, dreams and hopes, and also to gather stories of how the neighborhood has developed or changed to find out the most helpful ways for people to be involved. Here’s what Joplin residents are desiring:
- a. Connection:** Joplin residents have expressed wanting a sense of connection to their neighbors, but very often don’t know how to create this. We believe our neighborhood engagement meetings and neighborhood connectors can help break down some of these barriers.
 - b. Code Enforcement/Beautification:** Residents want swift, firm enforcement of our city codes and want their neighborhoods to look beautiful. Often times our own code and abatement processes take a significant amount of time of due process. We are identifying partners and resources to fill in the gaps to abate issues quicker.
 - c. Proximity to Retail/Restaurants:** Residents want to be able to walk and bike to places of leisure, entertainment and restaurants. There is a sense of wanting to be stakeholders in the unique identity of the place they live. We are working with Planning and Development to understand infrastructure improvement areas and redevelopment areas for connectivity. We want to ensure that our older neighborhoods are not left behind in the redevelopment of the areas most impacted by the disaster.
 - d. Green Space:** Residents long for smaller neighborhood parks that are easily accessed by foot and with basic amenities. We are investigating abandoned lots and city owned spaces for a discussion on how these areas might be legally utilized and maintained by citizen groups.

- e. **Safety:** Residents of Joplin want to feel they can walk at night, and also not have to worry about intruders in their homes.
- f. **Blighted Homes/Rentals:** Residents and neighbors are frustrated with blighted rental housing and absentee ownership. These properties are the most frequent violators of City codes and usually are the source of most neighborhood complaints.
- g. **Signage:** Residents want to know the names and boundaries of the neighborhood they live in, and they want signage to identify and give a sense of pride to their place, much like what has been done with Murphysburg.
- h. **Community Events:** Residents want to develop the unique character of their neighborhoods and they want to do this by creating distinct events that the neighborhood becomes known by. Examples of this include holiday parties, parades, art walks, historic home tours, fitness events, etc.

In summary, our research is giving us a stronger sense of what Neighborhood Services is to be about in Joplin. As we come nearer to describing our vision, it will clearly involve, “**empowering vibrant neighborhoods.**” Residents are not simply asking for status quo neighborhoods, they want to live in a place they can be proud to call home, and that vibrancy is what Neighborhood Services intends to be about.

PEOPLE

Currently, we have five full-time staff working and one intern in the Neighborhood Services Division. We have one Supervisor, a Clerk and three Neighborhood Improvement Officers. Given the size of the community, and the limited staff and resources, we are looking for creative ways and partnerships to address issues. New staff additions and subtractions are listed below as of June, 2015.

1. **New Clerk:** Pat Olsen has been a tremendous addition to our team since she started on June 15, 2015. She has helped create a much needed customer service atmosphere in the Neighborhood Services division, improved data management and efficiency, and I have heard from numerous citizens how pleasant she is to work with. Pat is the first line of contact in the office at the 4th Floor counter and when residents call. Citizens no longer call improvement officers directly as Pat determines the issue and routes to the appropriate person. This has alleviated a lot of call redundancy and customer complaints.
2. **Retired Neighborhood Improvement Officer:** Randy Shellenbarger, a 37-year employee with the City, retired on Aug. 3, 2015, and is severely missed. We sent him out with a great employee party and I have split his section of the city between me and the remaining three officers. While challenging, this has been extremely helpful for me to see the frontline issues officers deal with, and has also added an unintended, but much needed layer of credibility for me in my new role.
3. **Intern:** We currently have an intern working for us to inventory, manage and give vision to our Tool Lending Library. Lauren Myers is an MSSU student and works 12 hours a week.

PROGRAMS

1. **Neighborhood Identification Project:** As a part of our Historic Preservation Plan, our division is helping to identify the boundaries and names of every neighborhood in Joplin. This will give us much needed traction as we move to build neighborhood leadership teams and eventually branding of neighborhoods to provide citizens a sense of place.

2. **Neighborhood Leadership Teams:** As we connect with residents, we want to give them a tangible pathway to create change in their neighborhoods. This is why we are building neighborhood leadership teams or groups who can champion things like safety, celebration, generosity, beautification, and connection into the fabric of their neighborhood. The Neighborhood Block Connectors will be an integral component of this going forward.
3. **Volunteer Program:** We are exploring a volunteer program that can be the umbrella for many of the leadership opportunities we wish to create within Neighborhood Services. We are reviewing previous relationships with organizations and determining viability. Most businesses and organizations have minimum volunteer requirements for their employees. We could organize a program where the City is merely one outlet for them to assist in neighborhood efforts. In addition, our annual Great Day of Service role affords us an opportunity to make a big impact in targeted areas. Last year, we removed over ten tons of trash and debris from neighborhoods. This program is being expanded by our College Heights partner to be more inclusive of targeted areas and households in a broader area of the community, not just LMI neighborhoods.
4. **Adopt-a-Neighborhood:** a program whereby the city partners with several different churches and organizations to “adopt” the neighborhood they are in and coordinate clean-ups, minor housing improvements, and helping elderly and disabled residents maintain their properties. This was once a stronger program before the tornado, and we are sifting through this to rebuild a more comprehensive approach with added elements aforementioned.
5. **Tool Lending Library:** This is a resource for low-to-moderate income households who need access to yard and home maintenance tools for free. There is an application and small deposit required. Given this is CDBG funded and targeted to LMI households, it hinders being utilized in broader neighborhood efforts. We are determining ways to incorporate this into our efforts and look for alternative funding sources allowing us to expand to other non-LMI areas.
6. **Good Neighbor Award:** This is a way to positively encourage yard maintenance among residents of Joplin by awarding property owners who come into compliance after a notice of violation has been sent to them.
7. **Good Neighbor Flyer:** We now include a flyer informing residents of important nuisance codes into every violation letter we send.

IMPROVED PROCESSES

- **Code Enforcement as Opportunity:** The primary shift we are developing in our staff is to see code enforcement as an opportunity to engage with the citizens we serve, beyond merely a violation letter or site visit. This happens in two ways. First, by making every attempt to have a face-to-face or phone call conversation with the person in violation. If code compliance is the goal, we have found that sending letters gives us about a 30-50% compliance rate depending on the violation (estimate). However, when our officers have a face-to-face or phone conversation that compliance percentage jumps close to 70% (estimate). Secondly, we see those who call in to report a potential violation as people who care about their neighborhoods and are often not just calling to complain. Because of this, we are taking these as opportunities to meet with these residents to find out what they care about. Our eventual goal is to empower them to be a part of the change they wish to see in the places they live.
- **Code Enforcement Revisions:** We are still in the middle of scrutinizing our code enforcement process, looking for ways to improve the sometimes lengthy due process we

have. Some of our findings are in how we prosecute non-compliance as a criminal charge and the need to think about alternative avenues by which to demand compliance to City codes.

- **New Clerk and CivicPlus:** The primary complaint I heard from citizens the first month I was here, was about not knowing whether their complaint was actually being considered once they left a message on an officer's voicemail. With our new clerk and our use of CivicPlus (a request tracking system), we have now streamlined the process of accepting and responding to citizen concerns. If someone calls in wanting to know the status of their concern, Pat can easily look it up using our system and tell them where we are in the process. This alone has been a significant step forward for the Division and in customer satisfaction.
- **Customer Service:** I am working with HR to schedule a time for the Neighborhood Services Division to go through a series of trainings on customer service. This is much needed, and is one of the most common complaints I hear from residents.

EXAMPLES

Example 1: Turning Frustration into a Leadership Opportunity

On August 4, 2015, I opened my email to find 15 different code enforcement requests from an individual citizen. The sheer volume of concerns from one citizen had never happened before (in my tenure) and it piqued my interest, so I decided to email him back and inform him of our process and ask him if he'd like to meet to discuss the state of his neighborhood. He responded back enthusiastically and even took off work early the next day in order to meet with me. He and his partner welcomed me into their home the next day at 3pm. I found out that his partner had grown up on the street and his parents lived next door. I asked him for a history of the neighborhood and he recounted (with pictures in hand) of the days when their neighborhood had block parties and was one of the best blocks to go trick-or-treating on Halloween night. I felt like I had hit a jackpot. Here before me was a neighborhood historian who had lived his entire 40 year old life on this block and was frustrated at what it had become. He even regretfully stated, "In the past year, it's become so bad, that we've thought about moving."

Knowing this frustration had grown from a deep sense of care for the neighborhood, I asked him what his dreams for his neighborhood were. After describing block parties, safe streets, clean yards, and feeling connected to his neighbors, I said, "What if you are the very person who's supposed to create what you hope this neighborhood will become? What if you stopped waiting for someone else to lead change, and you became the change agent on this block?"

I'm not sure why, but somehow they both have become inspired and I think they feel empowered. On Aug. 27, I'll be meeting with them and several of their neighbors, who they've gathered to meet about how to bring about change in their neighborhood. I have asked them to join in with several church groups the Great Day of Service (our city-wide clean-up occurring Sept. 27 this year), and tonight we are going to plan the projects they will undertake on that day.

My hope is that these two will feel empowered to be a part of the change they wish to see in their neighborhood and I have plans to continue to mentor them toward that end.

Example 2: Frustration is Sometimes a Sign of Care

On August 18, 2015, the city manager, city attorney and several other city officials received an email from a an individual claiming a “neighbor complaint” against a realtor who she said “verbally attacked her” after she called and asked him to clean up a property he was selling on Main, close to her home. Her letter indicated she would be filing “daily complaints to the city” until the issue was resolved. I went in-person to meet with the individual. This person was so shocked that I offered to meet with her, I think by the time I got there, she had forgotten what the meeting was about. She told me all about her family and her dream of opening a rehabilitation center for the homeless. After 15 minutes, I actually had to bring up the letter she sent and what actions we were taking on it. I explained how our process works and that it may be a while before she sees any changes on the property, depending on whether the owner complies or not.

After that easier-than-I-thought-it-would-be-conversation, I also asked her if she’d like to be a “neighborhood connector.” This is the term we have created for someone who cares about their neighborhood and connects with others living there. She was very interested and wanted to know more.

By the end of our discussion we were on a first name basis - she asked me to call her by her first name.

I sincerely believe most people who are regular complainers to the City like this person are frustrated, but want a better neighborhood and do not know how to go about achieving that end, and sometimes go about it in unhelpful ways. I’m finding that individuals like this one have good intentions, but simply feel powerless to change anything, and so they look to those who they perceive to be in power (the City) and end up “complaining.” But really, they are concerned. They want to do something, and our job, I personally believe, is to *empower them with tangible pathways* to see that change come to fruition. Let’s continue to be about tangible pathways, and I think in 20 years, we’ll have different neighborhoods in Joplin. Again, while we will always have violations, and those repeatedly generate them, I believe we have opportunities to proactively address many issues that face us given thoughtful program development, time and resources.

To conclude, the Neighborhood Services Division is in a process. We are working hard to positively increase customer service experience and to provide tangible pathways to empower residents to create the quality of life then wish to see in their neighborhoods, all the while addressing our charge of abating the issues the affect our community. I believe we are making progress and I appreciate the opportunity to share the latest.

Thank you,

Stephen Grindle

Neighborhood Services Manager