

Canton, Georgia

*110 Academy Street
Canton, Georgia 30114*



Minutes - Final - Final

Monday, March 1, 2021

11:00 AM

Blight Review Committee

Virtual Meeting

Public Call In: 1-617-675-4444 PIN: 160 856 738 7753#

City Council

1. Call to Order

Present:

*Councilmember Shawn Tolan
Mayor Pro Tempore JoEllen Wilson
Councilmember Nick Estes
Mayor Bill Grant
Mr. Billy Peppers, City Manager
Mr. Bobby Dyer, City Attorney
Mr. Merrick McClure, Code Compliance Manager
Ms. Donna Bell, Executive Administrative Assistant to the City Manager
Ms. Annie Fortner, City Clerk*

The meeting was called to order by Councilmember Tolan. Councilmember Tolan stated his goal with this committee is to come up with an action plan and execute the plan. Councilmember Estes stated he would like to know the facts of what blight is, what is the current approach towards blight, and what the goals are moving forward. Mayor Pro Tempore Wilson agreed with Councilmember Estes and stated blight cannot be solved overnight. Mayor Pro Tempore Wilson stated she believes the committee should look at both proactive and reactive methods. Councilmember Tolan stated issues should be addressed quickly and sensitively. Code Compliance Manager Merrick McClure stated his department was very proactive pre-COVID but have had to back up and are now much more reactive.

2. Discussion of the Term "Blight"

City Manager Billy Peppers discussed issues the City has had over the last few years with blight. The City has adopted the International Property Maintenance Code however it is a scattered approach to get things done. This is much more of a reactive measure. Mr. Peppers suggested focusing on things that make the biggest impact in the City. Councilmember Tolan proposed thinking about financial assistance or community involvement to get some of the blighted areas addressed. Councilmember Tolan discussed the work needed to find some of the owners for rental properties. City Attorney Bobby Dyer discussed identifying the properties the City is willing to spend money on to overcome the roadblock of properties owned by LLCs. Committee members discussed their definitions of blight. Councilmember Estes stated blight is the inability to properly upkeep a property or home. Councilmember Estes discussed what it means to properly upkeep. Mayor Pro Tempore Wilson stated blight is anything that spoils or damages something. It is something that has a detrimental effect or prevents growth. Councilmember Tolan stated the City can only address issues from an exterior standpoint. Mr. Dyer stated permission from the owner or a warrant would be the only way to address any interior issues. Mr. Dyer discussed that code violations may exist without blight. Mayor Grant stated there has been confusion between code compliance issues and blight. Mayor Grant suggested it would be helpful to separate code compliance issues and blight for the citizens to better understand. Councilmember Estes asked if while trying to define blight, would it be best to use specific examples. Mr. Peppers stated blight is one of the triggers for urban redevelopment powers. One specific thing that can be covered under that is poor or inadequate infrastructure. Mr. Peppers noted areas of the City which have poor infrastructure. These areas could be incentivized for redevelopment. Mr. Dyer stated each case or issue is on a spectrum and it must

be determined if the case is reaching the level of blight. There is a legal definition of blight and it generally deals with safety and health. Mr. Dyer stated there is a point where an issue will move from Code Compliance Officer to Building Official to determine that a house is unfit or uninhabitable. Mayor Pro Tempore Wilson noted houses on East Main Street that were redeveloped. The City has a history of being involved. Mr. McClure stated he looks as blight as being structural related. Mr. McClure noted that on recent Notices of Violation that were distributed for peeling and flaking paint it deemed the properties as blighted. Mr. Dyer stated the reason that was noted was in case an abatement route is needed. The City has the right to abate any nuisance. A notice is presented to the owner of the property. If work is completed by the City due to no response from the owner, an abatement lien can be placed on the property. Mr. Dyer discussed a situation in a Cobb County municipality which taxes were raised seven times the normal tax rate on particular properties which were blighted. This money was then used for redevelopment projects. Once the particular properties were cleaned, their taxes were reduced. Mayor Pro Tempore Wilson asked if the City could do something like this. Mr. Dyer stated it would be a good case study. Mr. Peppers suggested having PROCHAMPS give a presentation to the committee in an upcoming meeting.

3. Defining Success in Code Compliance

4. Adjourn

Councilmember Tolan adjourned the meeting.