

CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

Monday, May 13, 2019

On Monday, May 13, 2019, the City Council of the City of Decatur, Illinois, met in Study Session at 5:30 p.m., at MacArthur High School, Decatur, Illinois.

Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe presided, together with her being Council members Bill Faber, Lisa Gregory, David Horn, Chuck Kuhle, Pat McDaniel and Rodney Walker. Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe declared a quorum present.

City Manager Scot Wrighton attended the meeting as well.

Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Moore Wolfe called for a study session on Neighborhood Revitalization.

City Manager Scot Wrighton announced that part two of the Neighborhood Revitalization study session will be held on Monday, June 24 at 5:30 p.m.; the location is to be determined.

City Manager Wrighton presented a PowerPoint presentation. Items for discussion included the following: 1) summarize previous community engagement meetings' data, findings and recommendations, 2) introduce new data, organized by neighborhood, from the Greater Opportunity Zone urban core area, 3) discuss what services & strategies could be deployed: i) city-wide, ii) in the Greater Opportunity Zone urban core, and iii) in a few target neighborhoods for demonstration impact and effect, 4) discuss how success in Neighborhood Revitalization should be measured/select desired outcomes that are measurable, and 5) start connecting outcomes to strategy options; including goals & objectives for the next Neighborhood Revitalization study session.

City Manager Wrighton discussed strategies that were developed from the Community Revitalization meetings that were held in 2017 and 2018 and were organized into the three following focus areas: 1) economic and residential development, wellness and vitality 2) local government regulations and relation; and 3) neighborhood regeneration, support and sustainability.

City Manager Wrighton explained that city staff inspected a total of 11,054 properties in several neighborhoods and rated the conditions of the structures. He thanked those individuals who put in countless hours preparing the data.

City Manager Wrighton discussed several primary and secondary neighborhood issues: absentee/negligent landlords, panhandling, prostitution, drugs, dilapidated housing, illegal dumping, deterioration of housing stock, overgrown vacant lots, shootings and potholes.

City Manager Wrighton discussed 36 possible revitalization strategies to assist in the decision-making process. Mr. Wrighton stated that criminal activity data will be available at the next community revitalization session.

The following citizens stepped forward to voice their concerns and suggestions:

Mr. Kent West stated that 36.8% of Decatur's housing stock are rentals because many residents do not qualify for home ownership.

Mr. Tony Caccamo suggested that the City Council should adopt a rental inspection ordinance, and also implement a new policy making residents who board up dilapidated houses pull permits to do so.

Mr. Brandon Boey is concerned with an out of state landlord who owns 30-40 boarded up houses in the Old Kings Orchard Neighborhood who has no interest in fixing or selling the houses. Mr. Boey asked whether the city had some type of policy to prevent this from occurring.

Mr. Alan Duesterhaus responded that there is the Abandoned Properties Rehabilitation Act that holds owners accountable to keep houses up to code. When a property has been found to be abandoned under any criteria of the Act, a municipality can seek possession of the property from the courts in order to rehabilitate the property.

Mr. Reed Sutman expressed that citizen input is needed on community revitalization efforts.

Mayor Moore Wolfe explained that the city held several community revitalization meetings for citizen input in 2017 and 2018.

Mr. Trevor May with Brinkoetter & Associates reported that Brinkoetter & Associates is partnering with the City of Decatur on a pilot program to get a better understanding of the needs of the city. Brinkoetter & Associates will start the pilot program between Kellar Lane and Harrison Avenue, south of Route 51, that is set to launch on June 1st. Mr. May will report back after the pilot program is completed.

Mr. Joyner suggested that the pilot program start in the inner city.

Mr. Larry Hutchinson suggested more community involvement in the decision-making process.

Mr. Gary Geisler stated that he appreciates the efforts of the City Council and staff, and he would like to see small parks and grocery stores integrated into the neighborhoods. He suggested that the process needs to start by going door to door to gather input from residents.

Dr. Dana Ray responded that council implemented Neighborhood Walks a few years ago and went door to door to get input from residents.

Ms. Datrice Weathers stated that she is new to Decatur and would like to be involved in the community revitalization process.

City Manager Wrighton asked Council to prioritize their goals by Monday, May 20.

Mayor Julie Moore Wolfe declared the Council meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Approved June 3, 2019

Kim Althoff

City Clerk