



COMMUNITY RELATIONS COMMISSION AGENDA
December 7, 2017 at 1 p.m.
City Hall, 222 Meigs Street

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

**Charlene Adams, Wendy Dobyys, Anthony Harris, Daryl Murphy,
Taylor Sutphen, Jennifer Washington & Dominic Wells**

CURRENT BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

- September 14, 2017

Presentation

- Sondra Anderson, Executive Director of Volunteers of America

Staff Remarks

- Neighborhood Initiative Coordinator Talon Flohr
Update on Neighborhood Initiative

Open Discussion

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURNMENT

NEXT MEETING(S)

TBD

Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m. after the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members present: Charlene Adams (*arrived at 12:35 p.m.*), Anthony Harris (Chairperson), Daryl Murphy, Taylor Sutphen, Jennifer Washington and Dominic Wells (Vice Chairperson)

Members Absent: Wendy Dobyns

Ex-Officio members present: Justin Harris (Law Department), Chief John Orzech (Police Department), Chief Rick Wilcox (Fire Department) and Talon Flohr (Community Development Department)

Staff Present: Kelly Kresser (Clerk) and Naomi Twine (Commission Liaison)

CURRENT BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes

Upon motion of Dominic Wells and second of Jennifer Washington, the members voted to approve the minutes of the June 29 meeting and suspend the formal reading. The Chairman declared the motion passed.

Introductions

Chief Rick Wilcox introduced himself and said he began working for the City of Sandusky on August 21. Chief Wilcox previously worked for the East Cleveland Fire Department for 26 years and said he performed a lot of community outreach and wishes to continue with this tradition in Sandusky. He looks forward to building good relationships and rapport with members of the CRC and hopes he can add to the mission of the group.

Staff Remarks

Justin Harris said he does not have any issues to bring to the CRC at this time, but noted there are two pending issues regarding commercial properties in the downtown area which may be brought forward at a future meeting.

Talon Flohr provided an Executive Summary of the **Neighborhood Outreach Plan** and said many of the projects identified are not being implemented in the model blocks. The Central Park public meeting went well and potential future upgrades were identified and cost estimates are being prepared for presentation to the City Commission in the near future.

Chairman Harris noted there were some **blighted properties** in the city and specifically asked about the former Herman's Furniture property. Chief Orzech noted this was property was recently purchased by Cedar Point and they do have plans to secure and develop it.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Chief Orzech said he understands there were questions about a recent **hiring involving an African American/minority Police Officer**. This Officer previously worked for the Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority (CMHA) and had taken a leave of absence from this position to come to Sandusky. He had an alleged issue with another Police Officer but after investigation, these allegations were found to be unsubstantiated. After working in Sandusky for a few weeks, the Officer received a phone call from his former Chief in Cleveland who indicated he must return to work by the following Monday or his employment there would be terminated; the Officer resigned the next day (Saturday) from Sandusky and returned to the CMHA. Since this time, two new Police Officers have started on the Department, one of which is an African American/minority. Chairman Harris stated he had heard in the community this Officer had perhaps been disciplined, but now understands this is not the case and said it appears he really did not seem committed to this community.

Chairman Harris said he lives on a quiet street but the apartments in his neighborhood seem to have taken on a **transition in residency** with younger people moving in causing arguments and disturbances; this activity has taken on the appearance of a drug presence to he and his wife. Justin Harris said there are specific landlord/tenant laws the city must abide by and we cannot pick and choose which to be more (or less) stringent with. Chief Orzech encouraged anyone with these kinds of issues to contact the Police Department so that reports can be prepared and a data trail started. Property owners with nuisance-related citations are given 30 days to abate the nuisance and if they do nothing, they can be billed for police response(s) thereafter. Naomi Twine also encouraged community block watch groups who see and hear nuisance activities and help with reporting and ultimately combatting them. Chairman Harris said one of his neighbors had put up signs encouraging motorists to slow down in his neighborhood but the police removed them and there are problems with speeding. Jennifer Washington said she understands there has been a change in ownership of W-T realty and said this may change their status with Erie Metro clients. Daryl Murphy said there should not be a question of metro housing versus non-metro housing and this is not a task for the CRC; those who see people breaking the law need to start calling the Police.

Chairman Harris asked if **fire pits** are legal in Sandusky. Chief Wilcox said these are legal if they are 3' or less in diameter and are used for recreational purposes. Clean, non-treated wood should be used and the minimum required distance from a combustible structure is 15'. Additional information will be emailed to the CRC members.

Dominic Wells asked for additional information about existing block watch groups. Talon Flohr said there are three existing groups he works with: 1) South Central neighborhood; 2) Conestoga/Churchwell Park neighborhood; and, 3) Stahlwood Drive neighborhood. When

attending meetings, he and other city staff members take notes about issues and report back to those departments which may be able to assist with different matters. Naomi Twine said these are usually organized by someone in the immediate area and each individual Block Watch group is dedicated to putting together meetings and preparing agendas.

Charlene Adams said she sees more problems lately with **homeless persons or squatters**, especially near the woods by the railroad tracks in the South side neighborhood; there are others who are staying in vacant homes. Chief Wilcox said if his Department is made aware of specific locations that should be unoccupied or vacant, they can perform structure searches. Chief Orzech said his officers try to assist homeless persons when identified or located to find them shelter or other necessities. Jennifer Washington said it would be good to know what organizations and resources are available in the community to help persons with these types of issues. Chairman Harris said he will work to put together information for the next meeting. Daryl Murphy said there is a definite community need and this commission should decide its goals at a later time when more information is available about programs and services. Chief Orzech suggested asking the director of the Volunteers of America, Sondra Anderson, to address the members of the CRC at their next, or at a future meeting.

The next meeting of the CRC was scheduled for Thursday, December 7 at 1 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon motion of Dominic Wells and second of Daryl Murphy, the members voted to adjourn at 1:13 p.m. Chairperson Harris declared the motion passed.

Attest: Kelly Kresser, Clerk

Date: ____/____/____

Anthony Harris, Chairperson

Date: ____/____/____