

PUBLIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

MARCH 22, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Groat at 5:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Deborah Groat, Henk Berbee, Tracy Richardson

OTHERS PRESENT: Jillian Froment, Tammy Penhorwood

AGENDA:

- Home Maintenance/Beautification Recognition Program

Mrs. Groat started by saying as we go through this process, we need to be very respectful of the Memorial Tree Program. Mr. Berbee had mentioned that the Memorial Tree Program might impact this program.

Ms. Froment gave a little history of this project. Back when the Strategic Plan was established, April 26, 2008, there was a lot of discussion about property maintenance and the overall pride in our city for both residences and businesses and trying to make it a focus over the next four years. Mrs. Groat and Mr. DeLong served on a committee and brought forth and reported that, not only should the city look at code enforcement to make sure it was applied fairly and often, but also have a carrot with that stick and recognize those people who take great pride in what they do, or those that have made great improvements in their home or business, or someone that purchased and renovated an area and being able to recognize that.

While working on the Comp Plan, Administration heard from the committee, as well as comments from people at the public forums, that they wanted the city to work on property maintenance, keep values high, so we can be proud of our city, not only on the way it develops, but assure that what has developed, stays in good condition. People wanted to see the city look at enforcement.

Start with the most obvious. Ms. Froment said there are signs still up from businesses that are long gone. Metal structures that hold up the signs are still in place. That might be a good place to start. There are areas where there are piles of

junk in front of homes and businesses that impact the neighbors. Could also start there.

Administration was asked, in conjunction with code enforcement, to give some thought to a beautification recognition program. Staff wants to work with Council on this program. Ms. Froment said the award should come from Council or the Mayor.

Looked at programs from other cities to get an idea of their programs. Mrs. Groat feels the program should start out with a two-month window, set a completion date, awards to be announced on a definitive date. Ms. Froment suggested starting small but yet achieve the intent of the program. If there isn't much interest in the program, rethink it or make changes, go a different direction.

Some ideas for the program.

- What do you recognize? What is that behavior that you are trying to encourage? Is it, you want someone who doesn't have a beautiful place now and you want them to make the place beautiful or is it you want to recognize the people who already do that. Can it be business and a residence. Should it be two different categories or all rolled into one?

Mrs. Richardson said you want to create a sense of, "Gosh, my neighbor did that and I can probably do that too." You want to look at business and residence. The types of beautification are going to be different. It makes sense to do two. She was thinking of an award per Ward, which creates competition. Competition can be good. Also suggested front-page photo/recognition in the newspaper. As far as beautification, it's aesthetics. You look at the property, you say it's well manicured, it's got flowers, it's mulched. Someone goes to the effort to go beyond what the average person would do.

Mr. Berbee said Dublin is careful not to show favoritism. Dublin uses out-of-town judges. Dublin looks at first impression, design, execution of design and maintenance. You still have to ask who is nominating, are they nominating someone else, who is judging, how careful do we need to be with that. Are you looking at floral aesthetics or looking at someone who has cleaned up their property. That's worthwhile as well.

Nomination criteria. Anyone can nominate a property owner.

Mrs. Groat noted two categories: “Most Improved” and “Beautifully Maintained.” For Most Improved, you should have a “before” and “after”. Documentation may be a picture or description of what needed to be improved, and what was improved and what the current scenario is. She noted Painesville, OH has one nominated home per voting ward and one business. She feels that keeps it small enough to be manageable.

Middletown’s program was felt to be too large.

Fairborn’s program is a good one. They have 8 districts. A committee member goes out into their district and checks the neighborhoods. That could be a City Council position if they are not eligible to participate in the program. Using outside judges will make this program huge.

Mr. Berbee asked about Parks & Rec members being judges.

Ms. Froment mentioned a Property Maintenance Appeal Board, which is required by Code. There are currently no appointments to that Board. If city begins more active enforcement, we may want to activate that Board. The purpose of that board is to have a place for people to appeal the decision of the city enforcement officer. That would prevent them from having to take their appeal to court. Possibly that same Board could act as judges for the beautification program. Also a possibility of this group (Public Affairs Committee) being judges. Could also look at a committee of people, such as someone from Master Gardeners or an architect or Design Review Board member. The Public Affairs Committee could oversee the Beautification Committee. City employees should not be involved.

May want to review the applications to make sure that an award is not given to someone who is, at the same time, violating the code. An example of that would be someone who put up a beautiful fence, but that fence happens to be in violation of the code.

Proper name of the Board is “Exterior Property Maintenance Commission.” Commission consists of five Marysville citizens, not employed by the City, one appointed by the Mayor and one from each ward of the City appointed by each Ward Council person.

Suggest having someone on the Commission with experience, possibly someone who has served on a Board or Commission of the city who would be familiar with the code. All members wouldn’t necessarily have to be experienced. Members are

going to need to work with staff in understanding the code and feel comfortable in enforcement, but understand the reasonable person standard.

Mrs. Groat said regardless of who the five members are, someone from Engineering should be involved to ensure accuracy of code enforcement. Ms. Froment said that would not be a problem. There is always a staff member involved in all Boards and Commissions.

Consider the residents from each ward in competition and that would be Most Improved and Beautifully Maintained. That would mean eight awards. Business should be one city-wide award in each category. Total of ten awards. Should not be any larger than this.

What happens if no applications are received? The Commission members could nominate a property with consent of the property owner or get someone else to nominate that property.

Photo would be turned in with the application.

Suggest alternating seasons – one season look at Most Improved – another season you look at Most Beautiful.

Don't think we want to do any more than two.

If we want to do the kick-off this year, have forms available in June for possible recognition in September.

Mrs. Groat would like to see something pulled together within the next month. This could be a positive thing for the city and community.

Spring planting season doesn't start until May 15th. Applications can be made available by May 15th. Recognition by the middle of August.

List local nurseries and greenhouses – propose donation of a \$10.00 gift certificate from each location.

May be more beneficial if someone can receive a larger sum from one location.

Summary:

- Applications will run from May 15th to June 30th.
- Program will run this summer, see how it goes, then will revisit.
- Specify when judging will take place.
- Recognize one residence in each ward for “Most Improved” and one residence in each ward for “Beautifully Maintained”.
- Businesses would be city-wide, “Most Improved” and “Beautifully Maintained.”
- Award will be announced August 26th at City Council Meeting.
- Certificate to be awarded. Other awards to be determined.
- This program will fall under the Exterior Property Maintenance Commission. Members need to be appointed to this Commission.
- Create initiatives and peers. Want neighbors and businesses to look at neighbors and say, “I can do that.”
- Self nominated or neighbor nominated.
- In “Most Improved” category, applicant will need “before” and “after” documentation. That can be in the form of a picture or description.

Suggest a yard sign for the winning properties.

Staff will work on application format and judging sheet.

Staff and Council work on appointments to Exterior Property Maintenance Commission.

Check with local newspaper for coverage of winners.

No “grand champion” awarded the first year.

Public Affairs Committee will meet on April 12th at 5:00 p.m. for a progress report.

Mrs. Groat will announce this program at the next City Council meeting and mention appointees are needed for the Exterior Property Maintenance Commission.

Meeting adjourned at 6:06 p.m.