

South Watch: The South Side Flats and Slopes Code Enforcement Project

Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2021

Mission: The South Side Flats and Slopes Code Enforcement Project works to improve the quality of life on the South Side by bringing people and institutions together to identify code violations, advocate for their remediation and monitor the outcomes. (This is also the mission of Oakwatch.)

I. Welcome/Introductions

Barbara Rudiak welcomed everyone and reviewed the agenda.

Present:

Bob Charland, Community Relations Manager, District 3
Betty Kripp, SS resident and SW committee member
Denise Hartman, SS resident and SW committee member
Eric Williams, Office of the Community Affairs
Barbara Rudiak, Member of the SSCC and SW committee
Gwen Bolden, Pittsburgh Parking Authority
Tim Lewis, Duquesne University
Jacky Kaiser, SS resident and SSCC board member
Kitty Vagley - SS resident
Jeff Neubauer, SS resident
Moirá Kaleida, Chief of Staff for Jessica Benham
Jessica Benham, State Representative
Rachel Webber, Nighttime Economy Coordinator

II. Presentation

There was no presentation this month.

III. South Side Property Progress Report

No one from Environmental Services or PLI were in attendance so Barbara took the opportunity to share with the group the process that South Watch uses to inform tenants/residents of a trash issue and when it makes its way to Environmental Services.

- 311 receives a lot of trash complaints from the South Side flats and slopes. The South Watch committee decided that we would attempt to educate the tenants and property owners about the refuse regulations prior to filing a 311. When we see or are alerted to a violation, the person living at the address is notified of the violation via an orange placard that is attached to the door. If the violation is simply that the trash can is on the sidewalk beyond the day and time allowed, we leave a yellow post-it note with the ordinances listed. Oftentimes this is enough for the violation to be abated. This process may be repeated several times and, if the violation continues, Barbara sends a letter to the property owner. Many of the violations are cleared as a result. At the June meeting, Barbara shared that she had written 60 letters to property owners between May, 2020 to June, 2021. Those that remain are then sent to Environmental Services via 311s. Barbara will also share the addresses via

email with Environmental Services with documentation of what has already been done to correct the problem. When South Watch began in March, 2017, the director of Environmental Services, Bill Klimovitch, shared that the citations for trash issues that ES issued were heard at the municipal court downtown and the judges would often dismiss the cases. Now the cases go before the judges in their own courtrooms. This is good news for South Side because Judge Gene Ricciardi really takes a good look at the evidence presented before he makes a decision. She provided an example from last summer. In this instance, a 311 was sent to PLI because the trash from 132 S. 18th Street was all over the alley behind the house. When it came before Judge Ricciardi, Barbara was able to confirm what the inspector shared and added that she had sent several letters to the property owner. Judge Ricciardi fined the property owner \$10,000. Although he expected the property owner to appeal, he felt the fine was enough to get his attention and clean up the property. Although this address continues to have trash issues, it is a good example of how citations do work. She continued to share with the group the addresses that were on the problem property list.

IV. South Side Crime Report - Commander Fisher shared that in Zone 3, not just South Side, YTD there were 5 homicides and 20 aggravated assault shootings. In the city, YTD homicides were up 30% and aggravated shootings were up 40%. As far as trends, he didn't see anything out of the ordinary. The hot issue was the East Carson Street corridor from 10th to 18th with crowds, drinking, etc. He shared that there have been 6 meetings so far about the problems along with possible recommendations. They are keenly aware of what is going on there. The PLCB and the nuisance bar task force has been in discussions with several of the bars. He recently met with the owner of Cambodian Kitchen whose establishment is open late to address the bar crowd after they leave the bars. The problem is that between 150 and 200 people are congregating on the corner of 17th and Carson and getting into fights. The police cannot force him to close but he has been told that he cannot cook out on the sidewalk. His business is take out only and customers must enter his business to order. Next week there are plans for a meeting with the owner of Foxtail to come up with solutions as it relates to crowd reduction, loud patrons when they leave the place and intoxicated patrons that are causing a lot of problems. There are a lot of people involved who are looking for all the options and trying to come up with solutions. Commander Fisher said that Zone 3 has a manpower shortage and is down by 6 officers and 3 supervisors. There are also additional officers on parental and medical leave.

Barbara shared that she, Allison Harnden and Rachel Webber, both from the Nighttime Economy office, attended a webinar sponsored by Social City. There were attendees from Milwaukee, New Orleans, Florida and other cities. What we are seeing here is also happening in these cities and others around the country. Those in attendance at the webinar were sharing suggestions as to what they are trying to keep their areas safe.

Allison Harnden shared that what is going on seems to be sort of a cultural transition, a COVID transition. It's bigger than all of us and bigger than a nightlife problem. This is about people readjusting to life. She added to what the commander had shared that there were lots of eyes from the city, along with multiple agencies, looking at and working on different solutions. She pointed out that a good half of the people out on the street are not patrons; they are not spending money; they are not going in the businesses. They are just out on the streets - that is where they're having their party. Some of the other cities like Nashville and Kansas City have privatized areas that they can have control over it. She shared that she is

a big fan of motivating behavior through environmental modifications and motivating people to move in a certain area with different environmental changes.

Commander Fisher commented that, unlike when he was growing up, the bar owners on South Side don't live in the neighborhood and are not as considerate of the neighborhood as they might be if they lived here.

On a different note, Barbara shared that students are and would continue to be moving in/returning to the South Side as residents and shared an incident that occurred during the 4th of July weekend that has resulted in some questions. There was a late afternoon party at a house where students lived and when the students were asked to turn the music down, they refused to do so stating that they could play their music until 10 PM when the noise ordinance went into effect. Barbara asked Commander Dixon about the city's host ordinance that holds the host of the party responsible if there is alcohol and the host and/or those in attendance are not 21. She said that she is not sure if, in the past, when officers were called to a house, they would ask to see anyone's ID. Commander Fisher stated that they cannot go into a private residence and ask for IDs. They can do this on the street. If there is a disruptive party, regardless of the time of day, 911 should be called. He also stated that residents should contact him if they are not pleased with the response by the police. He stated that he has a good relationship with the universities and they will handle complaints. Students are more responsive to the universities because there is disciplinary action that may affect their status at the school.

Referring to the party that Barbara mentioned, a resident shared that the police officer told the tenants that they didn't need to turn the music down because it wasn't 10 PM. He suggested that since many of the officers are now new to the South Side that education on issues/ordinances related to the the South Side would be helpful to both the police and the community. Barbara indicated that she and Bruce Kraus have spoken about the same thing and he offered his office to put together the city ordinances that are often violated. She thought that this knowledge could also be provided to South Side residents so that they can be more informed when they interact with a police officer.

V. Pittsburgh Parking Authority - Barbara shared the enforcement data for June, 2021 that she received from the parking authority.

SOUTH SIDE / 2021 JUNE					
2021 JUNE / Daytime Enforcement					
Area	CC	DD	II	KK	Total
Plates	10,864	7,988	6,676	6,653	32,181
Tickets	98	36	24	25	183
ROIP	0.90%	0.45%	0.36%	0.38%	0.57%

2021 JUNE / Nighttime Enforcement					
Area	CC	DD	II	KK	Total
Plates	5,872	3,956	4,365	3,948	18,141
Tickets	187	214	173	146	720
ROIP	3.18%	5.41%	3.96%	3.70%	3.97%
Total Enforcement					
Plates	50,322				
Tickets	903				
ROIP	1.79%				

Gwen shared that they are getting back to their regular enforcement of the South Side. Barbara stated that residents would agree that there are a lot of cars parked in the residential areas that do not belong to residents and are not receiving tickets. We are aware that the enforcement officers cannot be on South Side all of the time but are asking that enforcement increase. The lack of enforcement has an effect on what is happening on East Carson Street. Those who are going to the bars and partying on the street are parking in the residential areas without any concern about getting tickets. If better enforcement occurred in our residential areas, this might help with the problems on ECS.

Gwen stated that there is a team that is working into the evening and with some specialized enforcement, they are paying attention to the South Side. In addition, five new officers will be starting soon.

Barbara shared that she read that, in addition to tickets related to permit parking, enforcement officers would also be looking into other violations that occur and asked Gwen if that was occurring. She said that PPA has done some focused enforcement on no parking areas such as ticketing cars that are in the crosswalks.

Barbara asked about the changes that were being made to residential permit parking. There had been a survey in the spring that residents were asked to complete. Gwen said that the revision is still being worked on.

VI. Duquesne University - Tim Lewis reported that it had been a busy week on campus. Freshmen and new transfer students are participating in the FAST program - Freshman Advisement Summer Transition Program - taking care of registration, financial aid, etc. He shared that freshmen will be moving in on Wednesday, August 18th and upperclassmen will be moving in over that weekend. Classes begin on Monday August 23rd this year. He said that students will be required to provide their temporary and

permanent addresses in order to use an online portal where they get notifications from the university. That is how he creates his list for South Side, Uptown, Oakland and Mount Washington. He is currently working on the SS Guide revisions and hope to have it ready to give the students when they arrive on campus.

Evan Stoddard who is one of the leads with the universities mentioned that he had reached out to Alia Pustorino about the possibility of engaging with freshmen for a community service project during freshmen orientation. This has been done in the past but COVID prevented it from occurring last year. Tim said that Evan would need to speak with Alia since she manages these kinds of community engagement activities but said that Evan can contact him if he wasn't able to connect with her.

Allison shared with the group that she is under the impression that there will be a St. Patrick's Day parade sometime in September and wanted to work with Tim on making sure that the students are aware of the expectations for their behavior. Discussion continued around the date and those in attendance shared that there is a neighborhood street party on September 11th and the following weekend is Goat Fest. As we continued with the meeting, Allison was able to confirm that the St. Patrick's Day parade would be held on Saturday, September 18th.

VII. Mayor's Office Eric Williams from the Mayor's office shared announcements.

VIII. City Council Office Bob Charland shared that Bruce's office had 3 requests for funds from the capital budget - one, monies to initiate a master plan for both Ormsby and Armstrong Parks; two, upgrades to the dog park adjacent to the Riverfront Trail and; three, scraping and painting of the iron gate fencing in the slopes and Mt. Oliver. He shared that a lot of money could be saved by working to maintain them rather than replacing them in the future. He also shared that city council was voting on the ARP funding that included 2 million for demolition, 10 million for the Land Bank, almost 20 million for rec centers, 12 million for lighting and monies to restore staffing in the city. This includes 4 PLI inspectors - 2 construction and 2 for property maintenance. Bob also shared that the Parking Enhancement District monies are becoming more stabilized and Bruce is looking at options to increase revenue. He is looking into purchasing a new/used Gator and has worked with the Downtown Partnership to increase our Clean Team to 3 persons.

IX. State Offices

State Representative Jessica Benham shared the following:

- She had invited the PA secretary of agriculture to visit Hilltop Urban Farm and Democratic leader, Joanna McClinton to hear our priorities and what our community needs.
- South Pittsburgh Coalition for Peace received a grant to continue their work to address gun violence. The fire departments and EMS received grants to help with the losses they were seeing.
- There is a shredding event at the Brentwood Civic Center on August 28th from 9 - 11.
- There is going to be a Hilltop Health Check - health center and health fair - on September 25th from 10 AM to 2 PM at Brashear's new location on Brownsville Road.
- Her office is doing ice cream socials at the senior centers and high rises while also assisting with rent rebates.

- Requirements for work searches were reinstated for unemployment and her office can provide assistance if needed.
- She introduced a bill that would give municipalities like Pittsburgh more control over liquor license saturation.
- She also introduced legislation that would require landlords to install window guards when families of young children, older adults or people with disabilities request it. This stemmed from a young boy falling out of a window in Carrick.

X. Public Safety - Allison introduced her new assistant Rachel Webber who used to work with Lawrenceville Corporation. Allison shared that this is a period of transition and that there are lots of parts to the transition. It is not just patrons. It's businesses that can't get workers back. Many places are not open as many hours as they used to be and they are not using 100% of their tables when they are open. A lot of owners are working the line.

Most of the people coming to ECS are not from South Side and, although they need to be accountable, it is difficult to do that especially if they are not patronizing the bars. Those that are working on this are trying to figure out ways to do this.

The parking district monies have been a good measurement through the pandemic of how many people are down on the South Side. Currently, the revenue coming in is about 75% of what it was before the pandemic. Although there are a lot of people on ECS, there are a lot of people driving around, parking in other areas and walking in. In addition, more people are using their cars because Uber and Lyft are unreliable right now which leads to more complaints about motorcycle and car traffic

The next South Watch meeting will be on September 8th at noon via zoom.