

Oakwatch: The Oakland Code Enforcement Project Meeting
Minutes
September 19, 2018

Meeting Attendees

Present: David Manthei (landlord), Sgt. Mark Villasenor (Pitt), Guy Johnson (Pitt Police), Mallory Skrbin (Pitt), Erika Strassburger (City Council), Nicole Cochran (Res.) Lizabeth Gray (OPDC), Elena Zaitsoff, John Tokarski (Public Safety), Michael Medwed (Res.), John Wilds (Pitt), David Shifren (City Police), Mark Oleniacz (Res), Matt Landy (Pitt Student Conduct), Hannah Green (OPDC), Guy Giampolo (Res.), Commander Daniel Herrmann (PGH Police), Ethel Deluliis (Res.), Millie Sass, (Res./Landlord), Sophie Koss (Res.), Sgt. Ron Griffin (City Police), Bob Charland (District 3)

Regrets: Barbara Morello (Public Safety), Keith Paylo (Point Park University), Jeff Besong (Point Park University), Larry Robinson (County Health), Cassandra Williams (District 6)

Call to Order, Introductions

Elena Zaitsoff read the mission statement and reviewed the ground rules for the meeting. Introductions continued around the room.

Featured speaker | Councilwoman Erika Strassburger | District 8

Strassburger was asked by Oakwatch Chair, Zaitsoff, to discuss her priorities for the district. Her main priorities include, clean air and water, safe streets, development, and transparent government. She also mentioned priorities specific to Oakland, including the development of the Pitt Master Plan, a city-wide master plan, neighborhood plans, and development of the new UPMC Heart and Transplant Hospital. Plans for Pitt, the city, and Oakland neighborhoods are important for community members to voice their input about how they want their neighborhood to improve/develop.

Strassburger also wants her office to focus on a parking overhaul in Oakland. She believes the whole Residential Permit Parking (RPP) program needs to be adjusted. Her plan is to work with other council members from districts who deal with similar parking issues. She hopes to have numerous opportunities for public input.

Q: Are occupants living in ONE on Center? Is there retail yet? It seems there are many building being constructed where tenants live above retail space that remains empty.

A: Yes, there are occupants, but they are still working on securing retail. The building managers want to meet the needs of the community and are willing to listen to suggestions. Strassburger agrees, that it seems to be a challenge securing retail.

Q: How is the process going on replacing John Fournier from the Parking Authority (he recently left for a city planning job in Detroit)?

A: For transparency, Strassburger states that she is a member of the Parking Authority board. Feel free to send any questions regarding parking to her. I can tell you there are about 30 applicants for his

positions; many are professional from other cities with years of experiences. She is not aware of the current timeline for this.

Q: The RPP program does not seem to be making an impact. We give out more permits that we have spots available.

A: One of the problems is that this program is a one-size-fits-all model. Not all neighborhoods experience parking the same way. Strassburger hopes to incorporate parking strategies as part of the Oakland neighborhood plan, separate from that of the Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI). Her staff has been tossing around the idea of securing funding for DOMI to hire a consultant to conduct a parking study. She says, "We can't fix what we don't have data on."

Q: Where are we at with renter's registration?

A: After the public comment period, the registration was revised and sent back to the courts. It is have in the courts for four years now, which is an example of how Pittsburgh is treated as a second-class city; it is more difficult for us to pass legislation that differs from state law. This is testing the boundaries of that.

Q: How is the North Dithridge situation (loud/large parties) being handled?

A: District 8 is planning an annual North Dithridge sweep with Zone 4 police, university police, PLI, Environment Services, among other partners. The sweep will begin at 8:30 AM to let residents know the city has their eyes on them and informing them of garbage/recycling and other relevant things to note. They will also document any code violations. In the past, these sweeps seem to encourage a decrease in loud/large parties. Hersh is working on confirming a date.

Liz Gray: Oakwatch also has several sweeps planned throughout Oakland with Bruce Kraus's office and other community partners. We will release those dates in the near future.

Strassburger: Taking a page from Oakwatch's book, we are planning to work more closely with landlords. We want to identify ways our office can help education tenants about trash/recycling and have better communication with landlords every time there is an issue with their property.

Q: Is the intersection at 5th and Bellefield resolved?

A: The function of the painted bump-out at that intersection is to test if an actual raised bump-out would work. This addition would create a shorter distance for pedestrians to cross the street. This bump-out is phase one of 3. The second phase would be to include a crossing on the other side of 5th. From what Strassburger has been told, the safest pedestrian crossing is an all-way cross walk. However, what they have found is that in reality, pedestrians end up waiting so long that they end up crossing before the signal, which is more dangerous. It is better to add an additional cross walk.

Q: But an all-way cross works well at Craig and 5th.

A: Strassburger says that her office will have to look at the data on that, but from what they've found it's actually more dangerous.

Q: The time allotted to cross the street is not enough for people with disabilities.

A: Strassburger explains her office is working on improving that intersection and believe that a bump-out will help shorten the amount of time pedestrians will need to cross.

John Wilds: This intersection is becoming an issue for the university. Not long ago, a student was hit. The Chancellor is asking Wilds and staff what the city is doing on this.

A: Strassburger will pass these notes/concerns along to Maura in her office. She is working closely with DOMI on this project.

Strassburger says she plans to begin sending out a newsletter. She also wants to institute block/building captains – people who can pass information along from the District 8 office to their neighbors. If anyone has any suggestions on how her office can be more accessible/transparent, please share your thoughts.

Pittsburgh Police Zone 4

Officer David Shifren presented the crime report:

- 0 robberies
- 0 robbery attempts
- 0 car jacking
- 9 burglaries
- 1 burglary attempts
- 1 rape
- 0 arson
- 1 stolen vehicle
- 4 theft from auto
- 0 theft from auto attempts
- 12 theft from business
- 0 theft from business attempt
- 11 theft from person
- 0 theft from person attempt
- 9 theft from resident
- 1 theft by deception
- 0 criminal trespass
- 0 unlawful use of computer

There was an overall rise in thefts (22 total). This is largely to do with the return of students. This might be their first time living on their own/in a city environment; not used to locking doors/windows. Having roommates also mean more people coming in/out of apartments, making it hard to keep track of who's in the unit. Students also tend to own more pricey items that are easily stolen (laptops, PlayStations, etc.)

Officer Hermann gave citations report:

- 82 total citations
- 4 public urination
- 4 open containers
- 6 street parking citations
- 20 noise complaints

27 underage drinking
20 citations for party on N. Dithridge

Oakland was surprisingly quite the weekend of the Pitt vs. Penn State game. Pitt police geared up to expect activity similar to that of SempleFest. Since Pitt lost and the weather was bad, they didn't have many problems.

Q: Is there anything we can do about large sheets being hung up with offensive writing on them?

A: Unfortunately, people have the right to speak how they want on their property. I can send officers to knock on doors and ask tenants to courteously take down signs. Since, these properties are not commercial, sheets are not considered "oversized signs" citable by PLI.

In regards to parking – streets need to be clear for emergency vehicles. Police will write citations for parking too close to a stop sign/fire hydrant, but they likely won't cite for parking on sidewalks (if they are not blocking pedestrian right of way). If they did cite cars with tires on sidewalk, they would be writing citations for days.

Officer Guy Johnson, Mallory Skrbin, and Mark Villasenor | University of Pittsburgh Police

Crime report:

8 physical altercation arrests
1 disorderly conduct
5 drug violation arrest
3 open container citations
5 public intoxication citations
1 warning for panhandling
3 underage drinking citations – 1 arrest
5 conduct referrals
17 parties, 13 shut down, 4 warnings, 9 knock and talks

Pitt police have been leaving door hangers informing students to stay off the roof.

The university is also working on installing 60 cameras in Central Oakland, which will hopefully deter crime. Landlords are likely to agree to install cameras on their property because they get a free camera and if anything happens on their property, they can access the footage.

John Tokarski, Outreach and Education | Department of Public Safety

Learn more about the Student and Citizen's Police Academy [here](#). Register today!

The Fall 2018 City Wide Public Safety Meeting is happening on **Wednesday, October 17, 2018 at the Pittsburgh Project, 2801 N Charles St, Pgh, PA 15214. Light dinner will be served at 6:00 pm and the meeting will begin at 6:30 pm.** Discussion will revolve around the top of human trafficking in the Pittsburgh Region.

Leah Friedman | Mayor's Office

Please take the [Make My Trip Count Survey](#). Help Green Building Alliance, DOMI, and other community stakeholders make decisions regarding transportation improvements throughout the city.

The PGH Lab is in its forth iteration. The Department of Innovation and Performance test products developed by small businesses and startups. Learn more about the program [here](#).

RADical, organized by RAD Works Here, offers numerous day of free events throughout the city. Click [here](#) to find free admissions, performances, and actives.

Q: Who is paying to put in the sidewalk on South Neville Street along CMU and Central Catholic High School?

Friedman: I do not know off the top of my head.

Q: Can we put in a sidewalk along Boundary Street? Pedestrian, bicyclists, and cars all use the road; it's very unsafe.

A: There is a proposal to add an extension up to the railroad crossing by Boundary St. CMU has already added a portion for a bike path, but we are hoping to extend that.

Q: What is the update on the Joncaire Steps?

A: They are going through a punch list. They need to fix guard rails, add a ramp for bikes, and fill in the exposed crawl space underneath the steps. Right now the steps are closed.

**Note: The Joncaire steps have reopened as of September 24th*

Bob Charland | Council President Bruce Kraus's Office, District 3

Parking update: Zones B and M are getting new signs to show updated enforcement hours. They have not been replaced yet. There is a current work order for the signs.

386 Lawn Street is currently being demolished. Work should be completed within two weeks time.

Lizabeth Gray | Updates from Councilman Lavelle's Office, District 6

Cassandra Williams was absent; Liz gave updates.

162 Robinson is on the list to receive asbestos survey (the property has been on the condemnation list for many years). The house will be boarded up; it is infested with raccoons.

Lizabeth Gray | Updates from Parking Authority

John Fournier has taken a new job in Detroit and is no longer with the Pittsburgh Parking Authority. He has not yet been replaced. Below is a parking report for August 2018 (received 9.20.18).

Daytime Enforcement

Area	B	D
Plates	1802	1
Tickets	82	55
ROIP	4.55%	5500.00%

Nighttime Enforcement

Area	E
Plates	121
Tickets	11
ROIP	9.09%

Total Enforcement

Total Enforcement	
Plates	7025
Tickets	429
ROIP	6.11%

Over 500 new permits were issues for Oakland – all needed to be processed. Enforcement was lapsed during that time, but is now back to full force.

Lizabeth Gray | Property Progress Report

Starting this month, the property list will include a visual presentation to show the current state of listed properties. View the presentation [here](#).

For complete details, see the property progress report [here](#).

John Wilds, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Community Relations | University of Pittsburgh

The University of Pittsburgh has rescheduled their Comprehensive Master Plan [meeting](#). It will now take place on **October 9, 2018 in the University Club – Conference Room A, 123 University Place from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**. The University will first present the plan to the Board of Trustees on September 28th. The plan will then be made available to the public online [here](#) for review prior to the meeting.

Pitt continues to host a series of neighborhood block parties for student residents and permanent residents to get to know each other. The block parties will conclude with Central Oakland on September 25 and West Oakland on October 2.

Day of Caring will take place on October 19th and Pitt Make a Difference Day will take place on October 20th. A group of Pitt students will also be participating in [Garbage Olympics](#) to pick up trash in Central Oakland.

Lizabeth Gray | Updates from Point Park University

Keith Paylo wanted to pass along that the University will not be shutting down the shuttle at the end of the year. They first want to conduct a survey about housing on campus prior to make decision on shutting them down or continuing the service.

Adjournment

Chairperson referred attendees to community announcements listed on the agenda and the meeting was adjourned. Next meeting on Wednesday, October 17th at 12:00 PM at St. Regis Catholic Church (in the Community Room), 3235 Parkview Avenue. Entrance located on Childs Street.