

Oakwatch: The Oakland Code Enforcement Project

Minutes

September 20, 2017

PRESENT:

Lizabeth Gray, Hannah Green, Elena Zaitsoff, Max Kneis, Jessa Chong, Commander Daniel Herrmann, Officer David Shifren, John Tokarski, Pitt Officer Guy Johnson, Officer Steve Cetra, Ernest Rajakone, Maria Bethel, John Wilds, Keith Paylo, Kyle Miller, Micheal Medwed, Mille Sass, Amanda Finney, Bethany Loupicica, PPU Officer Matthew Mays, Kevin Stiles, Blythe Runsdorf, Janice Markowitz, Mark Oleniacz, Marjory Lake, Maria Bethel

INTRODUCTIONS

EZaitsoff read the mission statement and reviewed the ground rules for the meeting. She asked to continue the introductions around the room.

MAX KNEIS AND JESSA CHONG, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH STUDENT GOVERNMENT BOARD

Here to introduce themselves – MKneis recently elected as the new Student Government Board President – and to discuss their intentions to continue fostering a positive relationship between students and the Oakland community.

JChong expressed interest in continuing to collaborate with CGR and OPDC to launch initiatives that will aim to engage students with the community. She discussed the Student Government Board's efforts to promote a positive student/resident relationship, which includes marketing the block parties, partnering with the University of Pittsburgh Transportation Committee to plan a wellness and safety fair (with an emphasis on bike safety), and planning an Off Campus Living 101 workshop.

LGray and JChong discussed the need for an initiative to ensure that student move in/move out is less wasteful in the upcoming year. They will collaborate on ways to involve students in a committee to focus on ensuring a greener transition period.

MKneis expressed interest in continuing Pitt's effort to make Oakland streets safe – last year students worked with residents on a Safety Walk initiative to install more street lights.

JTokarski extended an invite for students to build relationships with and learn more about first responders.

Overall great feedback on latest Block Party (Oakcliffe). High turnout from both Pitt and Point Park students and residents.

COMMANDER HERRMANN AND OFFICER DAVID SHIFREN, ZONE 4 POLICE REPORT

Rooftop legislation passed: Residents can no longer be on their roof without an applicable reason – construction, etc. Police have authority to tell people to get down – believed that citations can be issued.

Q: What can be done to spread awareness about this new legislation? Warning letter put on door? Campaign from Mayor's office? Collaborate with Pitt Student Government Board?

Q: (EZaitsoff to DHerrmann) Asked for update on Dawson Street armed home invasion. DHerrmann was not aware of incident and agreed to look into it.

Officer David Shifren gave crime report:

Non traffic citations: 3 in July and 9 in August

3 disorderly conduct, 1 public intoxication, 1 false identification, 3 open containers, 1 public urination.

Weekly snapshot – crimes statistics by neighborhood and crime prevention tips.

Rising problem with stolen catalytic converter (located under car – locking car doors won't prevent this). Measures taken now include telling people to park in areas with more light and to call if you see anyone suspicious.

Q: Can each zone each week produce list of problem properties?

Q: How can we know if there is an appeal hearing for a citation?

A: MBethel - there is a list of disruptive properties online; disruptive property meetings are public – meetings are second Wednesday of month. Please come testify when Oakland cases are scheduled. Schedule posted online at <http://pittsburghpa.gov/publicsafety/disruptive-properties.html>

DShifren – cameras have proven very helpful in criminal investigations. Police recently able to identify man who was guilty of writing graffiti within Garage Door Saloon.

JOHN TOKARSKI, OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Citizens Police Academy – free program (Fall and Spring sessions) open to individuals ages 18+; takes you through small syllabus of what cadets go through; aimed at helping you better understand what it means to be a police officer

Student Police Academy – 10-week program offered to high schoolers; Fall session happening now at Sarah Heinz House – Spring session to take place at JCC

October Meeting – focus on emergency preparedness/readiness; in the midst of recent tragedies caused by natural disasters, it is important for residents to know what systems are already in place to help during an emergency and what they can do to be better prepared for any situation.

OFFICER GUY JOHNSON, PITT POLICE UPDATES

97 reportable incidents: 8 arrests, 47 citations [29 affiliated, 45 on campus]

1 aggravated assault, 2 defiant trespass, 5 marijuana, 1 DUI, 3 open containers, 13 panhandling, 7 public drunkenness, 1 public urination, 3 simple assault, 5 underage drinking

15 conduct referrals

11 party warnings or shutdowns

*vco – violation city ordinance

Underage drinking and marijuana citations numbers down.

Take a more proactive role in monitoring student safety - 6 officers to be on duty Thursday – Sunday.

Halloween weekend: Big party week for Point Park students. Frequent disturbances on 300 block of Ophelia.

Q: EZaitsoff – what can we do to take a proactive approach this year to monitor parties?

A: Point Park Officer Matthew Mays – dedicated patrols, 7 p.m. – 3 a.m.; will discuss plans with chief.

A: GJohnson - Measures taken last year include staffing a dedicated bike officer; option to talk to Point Park students on the shuttle before they leave downtown

COMMUNITY Q&A

Q: Janice Markowitz – received 9 calls this week regarding permit parking problems; more people, both students and residents, are being ticketed with intro of electronic system – it is unrealistic for people to secure an electronic permit every time someone visits them (people visit without much notice, type of car/license plate not always consistent etc.); many people have difficulties with app

LGray – all parking permit questions/complaints should be forwarded to John Fournier – emails can also be forwarded to her

JFournier was not present – said he would provide monthly report in regards to parking. He will also address the parking permit problem.

KIRK HOLBROOK, STATE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

Not present

ERNEST RAJAKONE, MAYOR'S OFFICE

Smart litter cans – standard cans with sensors that will collect data on trash collection. Should help crews have more efficient routes; trash cans can be moved/added to more needed areas where trash is abundant; important to remove pizza boxes in cans (they obstruct the sensor)

Initiative has begun, but has not been implemented in Oakland yet. Program has been a minimal cost to the city (you can place sensors in already existing trash cans)

CASSANDRA WILLIAMS, CITY COUNCIL

Not present

MARIA BETHEL, DISRUPTIVE PROPERTIES UPDATE

Permits, Licensing and inspections report included unreliable information – was not presented

No appeal form received from house on the 300 block of Ophelia yet – notice of citation has already been sent.

3204 Kenneth Square – 1 more strike and landlord will terminate the lease.

JOHN WILDS, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

3 out of 5 of the block parties have occurred. Two parties are scheduled for next week – Sept. 26 Central Oakland and Sept. 28 South Oakland. JWilds asks for community groups/members to spread the word about these block parties to long term residents, because these areas are student heavy. West Oakland has also requested a block party and it is in the works of being planned for this year – Pitt plans to partner with Carlow. JWilds confirmed that postcards advertising these events have been distributed.

Code enforcement sweep of Dithridge Street is planned. A sweep of Central Oakland is also planned with the Department of Public Services – landlords can be cited if they have not informed their tenant about trash cans needing a lid/providing their tenants with trash cans and lids. Confusion from students about whose responsibility it is to provide the trash can (sometimes it is written into the lease).

Campus Master Plan Meeting reminder – Sept. 27th 6:00 pm at University Club. Every 10 years the city requires the university to provide them with a 10-year plan (should be part of a larger 25-year plan). All are welcome to discuss what sort of developments will be included in the plan.

Q: community members – Pitt shuttles have been parking in the bike lane near the student union. JWilds unaware of bike lane issue, but will keep an eye out.

KEITH PAYLO, DEAN OF STUDENTS, POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

Happy to announce that Point Park has just welcomed its largest class ever – the university has hit capacity in all residence halls.

New playhouse to open in Sept. 2018. Many events are planned to be scheduled at the existing playhouse and should be expected to attract much fanfare. Point Park has committed to shuttles running from downtown to Oakland for one year after closing of existing playhouse.

Expressed the importance to communicating with students that the student code of conduct exists both on and off campus. KPaylo open to collaboration to engage students with the community – through block parties or other community focused events. Interested in planning their own sweeps (LGray offered her assistance).

Rising trend in Point Park students moving to Southside and Mount Washington rather than Oakland.

October 2nd Food Security and Homelessness Conference at Point Park. Student homelessness is a large problem. KPaylo welcomes Pitt to partner. Point Park recently opened a student food pantry

LIZ GRAY, COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Zone 4 Public Safety Meeting – Sept. 21 6:00 pm; various transportation focused organizations will be in attendance to discuss commuting through Oakland

Green Team – next meeting Oct. 12th 6:00 pm; discuss step program; securing volunteers to help survey steps in Pittsburgh

City Wide meeting – Oct. 18th 6:00 pm; discuss emergency response and readiness in Pittsburgh neighborhoods; looking for volunteers to act as contact point between city and residents during an emergency

COMMENTS

UPMC Emergency Department looking for place to visit to teach 1st aid.

Carnegie Mellon police asked again for a formal invitation to Oakwatch meetings.

MEETING ADJOURNED

EZaitsoff announced next meeting is at noon, October 18th, First Church of Christ Scientist, 201 N Dithridge St. Meeting was adjourned.