

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

August 6, 2013

In Attendance

Councilman Moses Freeman, Committee Chair; Council Chairman Yusuf Hakeem; Vice Chairman Chip Henderson; Council members: Chris Anderson, Carol Berz, Russell Gilbert, Larry Grohn, Jerry Mitchell and Ken Smith; City Attorney Wade Hinton

Others in Attendance

Police Department: Chief Bobby Dodd and Lieutenant Todd Royval; Council Clerk's Office: Management Analyst Randy Burns and Deputy Clerk Nicole Gwyn

Call to Order/Agenda

Councilman Freeman called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. He called Molly Cooper (Mayor's Office) to give an overview of how event halls, neighborhood associations and the public at large were notified of this public hearing. She indicated that Administration had contacted event hall proprietors and that the Department of Economic and Community Development had notified neighborhood associations about the meeting.

Public Input on Event Halls

Councilman Freeman asked everyone to stand who wanted to address the Council on this matter. After Attorney Hinton read the guidelines for addressing the Council at this meeting, Councilman Freeman opened the floor to recognize the following speakers:

- **Theresa Ivey** (of Peachtree Street in Ridgedale) - One particular event hall on East Main Street (part of her neighborhood) has had repeated issues, including recent shootings. Just recently, she and her neighbors have heard gunshots in the middle of the night that they believe emanated from that event hall. She does not see sufficient police patrols in her neighborhood. She does not see enforcement of the laws that are already in place regarding these businesses.
- **Gwendolyn Blackmon** (Event Hall Owner) - She displayed the special permit for her event hall and read some of the guidelines that she must follow to keep her permit. It took one year to receive her permit. As part of the applying for the permit, she had to get her neighborhood association's approval. She voiced concerns about event halls that did not have to undergo the same steps she took in securing a permit.
 - A discussion ensued in which Attorney Hinton noted that the "Special Exceptions" permit, which Ms. Blackmon has, is different from the "Special Gathering" permit regulating other event halls. He noted that the Special Exceptions permit falls under Zoning.
 - Chief Dodd and Lieutenant Royval were called to respond to questions from the Council about enforcement of unregulated businesses.

- **Cynthia Stanley-Cash** (North Brainerd Neighborhood Association) - She testified about Ms. Blackmon as a reputable event hall owner who follows the guidelines of her business permit. She worked the Council to deal with illegal clubs a few years ago and has a problem with illegal clubs being called “event halls.”
- **Gary Ball** (Owns a business on East 14th Street) - He clarified that the Variance Board is responsible for Special Exceptions Permits, not neighborhood associations. He does not believe that zoning is the issue. He believes there is too much confusion about the types of businesses operating as “event halls.”
- **Kerrick Johnson** (Fort Negley Neighborhood Association on the Southside) - He thinks that rules should be put in place to protect neighborhoods for event halls. He knows there are event halls in his area that do not have proper licensing, especially for serving alcohol. He feels like his neighborhood association is helpless in dealing with the problems associated with these event halls.
- **Paula Cannon** (Glenwood Neighborhood Association) - In addition to her neighborhood association, she is the President of a solutions-based council that held strategic planning sessions for their community. Something that came out of their strategic planning is the concept of an event venue that will provide “safer” entertainment: an outdoor amphitheatre, which is proposed on property behind the Carver Center, off Citico Avenue. She also spoke about the upcoming Glenwood Festival, which is the 150th celebration highlighting the community.
- **Charles Mannis** (of East Main Street) - He recommended that all event halls should be under the same zoning and that all event halls should be required to have a beer/alcohol license. He said the shooting that took place recently on Dodds Avenue actually started at an event hall on East Main Street. He feels that all event halls should have the same zone, an alcohol permit and at least \$1,000,000.00 worth of liability insurance. He voiced concerns about East Main Street, which is a federal highway (US-41), but does not see the laws being enforced upon event halls on that federal highway.
- **Jerry Sterling** (Riverfront Business & Restaurant Partnership) - His association is a nonprofit that represents businesses and residents under their organizational “footprint,” which encompasses areas in District 7. He voiced concerns about panhandling causing safety problems downtown and wants more enforcement against panhandlers.
- **Milton Jackson** (Alton Park/Piney Woods Neighborhood Association) - He voiced numerous concerns in the neighborhoods that he represents, including a lack of employment and vocational training opportunities. He also hopes the Council will do something to regulate water fees.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Councilman Freeman adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.