

**South Watch: The South Side Flats and Slopes Code Enforcement Project
Meeting Minutes
November 8, 2017**

Mission: South Watch: 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 Oak Watch.)

1. **Introductions**
2. Barbara Rudiak asked all to speak loudly and clearly because we do record the meeting for purposes of keeping the minutes. She then shared the mission of South Watch and asked attendees to introduce themselves.
3. **Attendees:**

Barbara Rudiak	South Watch, SS Community Council
Tom Smith	South Pgh Reporter
Officer Nathan Auvril	Pgh Police, Zone 3
Commander Karen Dixon	Pgh Police, Zone 3
Betty Kripp	South Watch
Roberta Jameson	DPW/ES
Shawn Wigle	DPW/ES
Joe Cwiek	Resident
Anna Marie Kijanka	South Watch

Tim Lewis	Duquesne University
Liz Style	South Watch
Liz Gray	Resident
John Fournier	Pgh Parking Authority
Candace Gonzalez	SS Chamber of Commerce
Judge Gene Ricciardi	District Judge

1. **South Side Property Progress Report**

2. Barbara Rudiak

3. Barbara Rudiak announced a change in the agenda order as Judge Ricciardi would be a few minutes late getting to the meeting. She also explained that we will now include a list that focuses on the ten properties that are persistent code violators. So far 90 properties have been reported, 54 have been remediated (either through South watch or Environmental Services) and 27 continue to be monitored including those on the list. Also someone is now monitoring properties from the Birmingham Bridge to South Side Works on the river side. A big problem continues to be the lack of lids and we are considering adding graphics on the back of the orange placards to be clearer about this problem.

4. Regarding the above mentioned list, Barbara referred to the first 3 items on the list that are being addressed by PLI, 129 S. 13th St (vacant land, overgrowth and rubbish) and 133 S. 22nd (sidewalks). The 3rd listing, Mary St./Edwards Way are up for Treasurer's Sale but no bid yet. There may be an interested developer but Barbara noted that we may need to do our due diligence to compile a fact sheet showing what is actually being purchased...facts and figures. The starting price for these is 100k but that is only what is owed to the city and doesn't include other costs. She also questioned whether we

have to wait for another Treasurer's sale in the spring. The property on Wrights Way is also up for Treasurer's sale and there may be some interest in buying the 13th St. and 22nd St. properties. These properties used to be owned by Davin Gartley but are now owned by someone who has not paid their property taxes in a while.

5. Shawn Wigle and Roberta Jameson

6. Shawn and Roberta shared the following information:

922-930 McArdle: Roberta stated that things seem to be better but Betty Kripp noted that they are still in violation. Roberta said that they have not yet gone to court and they will continue to monitor but have not received any more complaints. Betty asked if it was still necessary to report violations since citations have been issued and waiting for ct. date. Roberta answered in the affirmative and add that continued complaints, with pictures, will help the case against them.

171-173 Pius: Roberta said that it has been cleaned up and explained that they use a private hauler and put trash out on a different day. The foreman recently reported that it was good after a weekend check.

1918 S. 18th St.: no information

494 Sterling: citation has been issued

42 Eleanor St. an arrest warrant is still out for the property owner but they can't find him even though someone appears to be living there as water bills are being paid. Barbara suggested that perhaps someone from the slopes could keep an eye on the property. ES will continue to issue citations.

2514 Josephine and 2641 S. 18th: properties were serviced and information was left at the property. Roberta reported that RE 360 has been contacted (2514 Josephine and they (RE360) said they would inform tenants. If this does not improve, citations will be issued.

185 Pius: letter sent to tenants to get more containers. If not, citations will be issued to tenants and owners.

24 Magdalena: warning letter left ...will check back.

1. Liz Style thanked Shawn Wigle for responding so quickly to a resident complaint of an overflowing dumpster in a parking lot on Carey Way behind the bank. She walked past the dumpster a few days after the resident had attended the October South Watch meeting and spoke with Shawn and noted the locks on the dumpsters.

- Roberta thanked the group for their concern and care for the community and added that it is very helpful to their workers. She was particularly glad for the help on the property behind Wingstop and that issue may be resolved. Barbara responded that she was glad that ES is willing to work with SW. She added that even though there is a gate to the property on 14th, (probably owned by the architects) there is an opening so maybe a gate could close that up. Roberta urged caution going back there. Even though Wingstop

has closed, the property owners are still responsible for the property and a citation has been issued.

- **Presentation- Code Violations in Magisterial Court- Judge Gene Ricciardi**

1. Judge Ricciardi
 2. Judge Ricciardi brought up the SW mission statement which prompted him to state that these quality of life issues should be filed in his district court-not in Pgh Municipal Court (PMC). Currently ES and DPW citations are filed in PMC and each district judge rotates to hear the cases. Gene said that this process prevents him from knowing the entire situation. He urged us to advocate for filing in districts. Roberta Jameson reported that Councilman Dan Gilman brought this up yesterday at a City council meeting. Judge R was glad to hear this and suggested that we put a letter advocating for this change and follow up with Gilman.
 3. Judge Ricciardi stated that the goal is always to solve the problem. When citations are issued, the hearing is scheduled. In general, 25% of problems are taken care of before the court date. 25% are dead-end cases..owner out of town, bad addresses or deceased...but the problem still remains. Judge R. noted that the city needs a process to take care of these problems. 25% are postponed and most of the time the problem is resolved by the time they come back. 25% are dismissed if the problem is taken care of in a timely manner...the court will reward you for solving the problem. Only about 2% go to trial and those are mostly over-occupancy. Now liens can go to primary residence after recent legislation was passed. If the problem is egregious, Judge R. issues big fines. Court costs are imposed only if you lose the case.
- It is very important to attend court sessions as it brings it to a different level. Judge R. reminds defendants that the inspector didn't find you. The citation resulted from a 311 call. In the Ricciardi courtroom, all is very informal and everyone has an opportunity to talk. Then residents should monitor the outcome and let Judge R. know if things aren't working out. Gene welcomes feedback. Most cases are from PLI...weeds, abandoned cars, debris, garbage, unsafe structures, windows, sidewalks. Quality of life issues are so important and that makes it very important to get them filed in his courtroom.
100. Barbara R. asked if the judges interact and discuss how to handle cases. Judge Ricciardi responded that individual cases can't be discussed but practice and imposing mandatory fines are discussed. Judge R. fully upholds imposing mandatory fines but

some judges do not. For example: the mandatory fine for public urination is \$500 but some judges will only impose \$50-\$100. This underlines the necessity of filing in district but at the present time it is easier to file in PMC; less staff is needed and the staff are paid by the county. A comment was made that a unified filing system is needed to overcome these challenges. Betty Kripp asked if the complete list of local cases is listed in the Reporter. Tom Smith replied that all housing court cases with local addresses are listed in the Reporter.

101. Discussion /questions about the inspection levels followed. A resident asked about the 3 levels of inspection. Liz Gray said that the same inspector should do all 3 inspections. John Fournier added that director Maura Kennedy changed the process and now her inspectors are cross-trained so one can do it all but there are still some that have to remain separate. John also added that it is well known that Gene Ricciardi is one of the best district judges, if not the best. Applause followed.

1. **South Side Crime Report**

2. Officer Nathan Auvril

3. Saturation Patrol Statistics from July 1st to the end of September

Officers worked on detail	395
Supervisors on detail	51
Physical arrests	48
Non-traffic citations	137
Traffic citations	524
Vehicles towed	172

1. Commander Karen Dixon
2. The recent shooting at St. Patrick and 18th Is under investigation. Some one in a car shot at a car in front. The victim was hurt by flying glass. The female who fatally stabbed her boyfriend at the Brew house has been arrested. It was domestic violence related.
3. The Crime Statistics: South Side Flats report YTD 2012 –September 2017 was distributed. Commander Dixon noted that crime is pretty much down.
 - Commander Dixon presented the opioid stats through 11/5/17
 - Flats – 56
 - Slopes -26
 - Carrick – 90
 - Mt Washington -64

The victims are younger than 19 and up to 71

231 white men

102 white women

18 black men

9 black women

6 unknown

1. A resident asked about younger men, dressed in black, with black knap sack who have been walking around checking cars to see if they can get in. They drive out of state cars and can't be found. The police have responded quickly, take the report and investigate. Commander Dixon emphasized how important it is to call 311 and added that they get lots of good information from cameras. Continuing, she said that the majority of crimes are thefts but bike thefts are down. She added that Ju Ju did not file a police report. Regarding package thefts, now many are being done by couples. She is planning to bring a burglary charge against a woman who opened a storm door to take a package once the woman is identified.
1. Barbara Rudiak asked how we can help other than asking trusted neighbors to get packages. She added that we have to keep educating people. Cameras are nice but now the package is gone. Dixon added that this is a problem across the city. Liz noted that Amazon now has a pick up site in Oakland and a house bound person in S. Oakland accepts packages for students.

- 2. Bike Pgh is pushing for people to use U-locks and Pitt requires their students to sign an agreement that they will comply. In fact, Pitt Police will take bikes not using U-locks and students have to pick up.
- Finally Commander Dixon shared that the # of zone officers is up to 104...8 new officers. Stolen phones and wallets are still a big problem.

1. **Pittsburgh Parking Authority**

2. John Fournier

3. John noted that the numbers looked good and shared the following statistics:

	Plates Read	RPP tix	No parking tix
CC	4209	52	28
DD	2448	13	42
II	1728	15	8
KK	7122	212	34

- 1. To highlight the success of RPP, John is now giving statistics at Oak Watch and this has helped residents appreciate the value of this system. Barbara noted that Dave Breingan from Lawrenceville United spoke to the SSCC board about liquor licenses and during that time asked about RPP because of interest there. Not all SSCC board members are happy about RPP so he got mixed feedback. He also asked if SSCC would speak with residents of Lawrenceville.

1. **News from Duquesne University**

2. Tim Lewis

3. Tim reported that about 60 students and residents participated in a social gathering on October 25th with the sponsorship of SSCC and SS Chamber. Part of the festivities was a trivia contest with mixed teams and Candice sent along an article to the S. Pgh reporter.
4. Before Halloween, students were reminded about their responsibilities regarding any partying. Tim received 3 complaints that weekend: one large party, one small party and trash. Tim is working through all this.
 - December 6th is reading day for finals and SS Library will provide space and DU will provide snacks. There will also be a visit from Animal Friends therapy dogs.
1. Greg Briski is working to try to engage students in design for SS Public Art murals on Fox Way. Students are also doing graphics on various student issues: drinking, trash, etc. Tim shared designs. The trash design may be included on the back of the SW educational placards.
2. Commander Dixon noted that DU police quickly followed up with the large party on 12th Liz Style reported that some DU students on 17th St. participated in giving out candy on Halloween night.

- **News from the Mayor's Office**

Not present

- **News from City Council**

1. Barbara reported that Neil M. had planned to attend but he texted to say it was too busy at the office.

2. **News from state Offices**

Not present

1. **Community Announcements and Events**

Candice shared that the DU tennis team got the snowflakes out of storage and on Saturday morning, volunteers helped to clean up and test. Volunteers were also working to repair and clean veterans' memorial.

The SS chamber holiday party will be at Clear Story on December 7th.

Shawn announced that the city-wide yard refuse collection will be on November 18th. They will collect only paper bags containing yard waste. Roberta added that there is no limit on the number of bags.