

HUMAN RELATIONS BOARD
WEDNESDAY, September 21, 2022
4:00 P.M.
Virtual Meeting
Battle Creek City Hall
10 N. Division Street

"To increase constructive communication among all people regardless of actual or perceived race, ethnicity, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, height, weight, marital status, physical or mental disability, family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socioeconomic status. To also increase constructive communication between residents, public officials, and community organizations, thereby promoting harmonious and productive relationships within the community, and equitable access to community resources for all."

A. INVOCATION

B. ROLL CALL

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. August 17, 2022

D. COMMUNICATIONS

E. COMMITTEE REPORTS

F. OLD BUSINESS

1. Community Survey for the CRB
2. Update on Language Access Services
3. Code Compliance: Exploring HRB's role in supporting this work

G. NEW BUSINESS

H. COMMUNITY POINTS OF INTEREST – OPEN DISCUSSION

I. PUBLIC COMMENTS

J. BOARD COMMENTS

K. NEXT MEETING – October 19, 2022 at 4:00 PM

L. ADJOURNMENT

**Human Relations Board
Battle Creek City Hall
10 N. Division St.
Virtual-ZOOM
Wednesday August 17, 2022
4:00 P.M.**

Board Members Present: Comm. Szenda Wilson, Deana Spencer (4:07pm), Chris Lussier, Jeffrey Cotton, Keona Ackley, Aubrey Kipp, Donald Woodward (aka Pao Shan) and Emirrora Austin, all attending remotely from the City of Battle Creek

Staff: There were none.

Guests: There were none.

Board Members Absent: Jennifer Gregor, Derrick Freeman, Pam Lasley, Whitney Wardell and Comm. Herring

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm.

Approval of Minutes: A motion was made by Keona Ackley, supported by Chris Lussier, to approve the Human Relations Board minutes of July 20, 2022. All yes, none opposed. Motion approved.

Communications: There were none.

Committee Reports: There were none.

Old Business: Comm. Szenda Wilson introduced the individuals from VOCES who are providing Spanish Translation Services for this HRB meeting. Comm Szenda Wilson noted this is a pilot program which the HRB is testing for the City, hoping to encourage participation and constructive conversations from our non-English speaking residents.

The Board discussed the creation of a Community Survey around developing a CRB and collecting relevant information from the survey.

Comm. Szenda Wilson thanked Mr. Hooper, Mr. Woodward (aka Pao Shan) and Ms. Ackley for helping develop the survey.

Board members discussed potential survey questions.

The City will promote the surveys in the water bill in September with instructions, additional outreach will be done utilizing our community partners for distribution.

New Business: There was none.

Community Points of interest: Ms. Spencer shared concerns with permits and code issues residents' encounter with Code and Inspections.

Mr. Cotton expressed the desire to connect with City leaders to address violent rivalries involving teenagers from the City of Battle Creek and City of Kalamazoo, noting little attention or resources available, the Board discussed.

Mr. Cotton requested information on who is responsible for maintaining City sidewalks, noting concerns on Michigan Avenue near Leila Arboretum.

Mr. Lussier provided some feedback around Code and Inspections and the permitting/violation process. Mr. Lussier stated many of the Neighborhood Planning Councils are beginning to meet again, neighborhood concerns may also be shared with the City representative at the NPC meetings.

Ms. Ackley suggested we invite a Code and Inspections representative to a future meeting to discuss concerns.

Mr. Cotton has questions around mold and lead in older homes. Mr. Lussier stated he will reach out directly to Mr. Cotton with more information.

Public Comments: There were none.

Board Comments: Comm. Szenda Wilson gave a brief overview of the DEI officer hiring process.

Next meeting: The next meeting of the Human Relations Board September 21, 2022 @ 4:00pm.

Adjournment: Comm. Kathy Szenda Wilson adjourned the meeting at 5:07pm.

Strategic Code Enforcement

How to Use Strategic Code Enforcement to Prevent Vacancy

Broken doors, high grass, or a sagging roof are more than just visual cues of vacancy. They pose serious health and safety concerns - and communities have the power to take action in response through code enforcement.

Code enforcement, defined broadly, includes all of the elements involved in obtaining compliance from private owners of vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties. Property ownership comes with important responsibilities, including maintaining properties in compliance with local codes.

What is strategic code enforcement?

Strategic code enforcement focuses on maximizing compliance while minimizing intervention from local government. It's an approach to code enforcement that uses data and community input to make the most of limited resources to achieve a community's goals.

Strategic code enforcement often involves public, private, and resident partners. The best strategic code enforcement efforts are equitable, effective, and efficient.

Equitable code enforcement recognizes differences in circumstances and provides the necessary support and protections to property owners in more vulnerable positions. Equitable code enforcement mitigates individual hardship while still working to improve property conditions.

Effective code enforcement results in an improved property that meets local standards. Property owners might comply voluntarily, or local governments can take action to abate the nuisance and recovery of costs or transfer ownership to a new responsible owner.

Efficient code enforcement achieves compliance in the shortest period of time and at the lowest public cost.



Code enforcement that is used equitably, effectively, and efficiently is one of the most promising approaches to vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties.

Learn More about Strategic Code Enforcement at communityprogress.org/resources

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Who is involved in strategic code enforcement?

Many different people are involved in a strategic code enforcement effort. Housing and building code enforcement officers are the individuals who inspect buildings for health and safety. They are responsible for responding to immediate and critical community needs. Department and division managers, attorneys, hearing officers and judges, and other public agency staff may also be involved. These individuals are collectively charged with finding ways to facilitate property owners to comply with necessary building and housing standards.

What success looks like in strategic code enforcement

When developing an equitable, effective, and efficient strategic code enforcement program, consider the following important elements:

- Use proactive, data-driven interventions tailored to neighborhood market conditions
- Invest in the health and safety of residents
- Give code enforcement officers the ability to diagnose problems
- Accommodate and protect vulnerable property owners who want to comply
- Build and maintain trust with community members
- Empower staff who have excellent interpersonal and problem-solving skills
- Allocate limited financial resources thoughtfully
- Define, measure, and report success
- Coordinate efforts across departments

Strategic code enforcement is one important way your community can address vacant properties. By responding to code violations in ways that are supportive, not punitive, and working in partnership with property owners, communities can make the most of time and resources and improve conditions for an entire neighborhood.



What are common issues that strategic code enforcement can address?

EXTERIOR

- Broken windows
- Broken doors
- Loud noise
- Junk vehicles
- Trash and debris
- High grass
- Peeling paint
- Sagging roof
- Deteriorated porch
- Couches on porch

INTERIOR

- Broken windows
- No fire alarms
- Mold
- Sewage backup
- No heat
- No water
- No vent plates
- Bug infestation
- Lead paint hazards
- No way to secure doors

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