

Official Proceedings of the Mayor and Board of Aldermen taken at a Special Meeting held on January 10, 2018 at 6:00 P.M. at the Arnaudville Community Center, 271 Guidroz Street, Arnaudville, La. 70512.

Present: Mayor, Kathy M. Richard

Aldermen: Annette Guidry (Absent) Jamie Huval, Todd Meche, Louis Stelly, Jr., Suzanne Stelly

Town Clerk: Dolores R. Quebedeaux

Attorney: Katie Ryan

Building Code Inspection Services, LLC: Rodney "Cooney" Richard

Re: Building Code Inspection/Blighted Property

Called to Order: Mayor, Kathy M. Richard

Prayer: Suzanne Stelly

Pledge: All

Re: Building Code Inspection / Blighted Property

Mayor Richard said that the Special Meeting was in regards to questions about the Building Code Inspections and the Blighted Property from the last Regular Town Meeting.

Mr. Cooney explained that he is using the 2012 code book; the state will be adopting the 2015 code book in February 2018. The code book is not mandated by the state. Mr. Richard works for approximately 15 different municipalities and they have adopted the code book.

Mr. Cooney explained examples of the process for junk cars, long grass and etc.

Todd Meche said that he read in the 2015 code book and stated that an appeal board would have to be formed. Mr. Cooney explained that the appeals board is the Council. He also stated that Chapter 1 is superseded by state law. He said that condemning a piece of property, the state has different regulations. He also said that Chapter 1 is not a good one to follow. Todd Meche said that he does not want to adopt an Ordinance if he does not know what is in regards to. Todd said that the Ordinances are not being enforced. Mayor Richard said that the Ordinances are being enforced. Mr. Cooney used the mayor as an example, he said if the Mayor goes out to condemn a piece of property and the homeowner challenges her, what would be her expertise to show up in front of a judge to fight that case, that is why a certified inspector comes into play in writing these reports to challenge the homeowner. Todd explained that fines have not been issued for some of these individuals. He feels the Ordinances on the books should be enforced. Mr. Cooney stated that is the building official's responsibility to enforce these codes. Todd said that the town has a magistrate. Mayor Richard stated that she does not issue fines. Todd does not want to impose all of these laws on the citizens'. Mr. Cooney said that Todd's argument was great, but he feels there is no one to enforce this, that is where he comes in. Mr. Cooney said that the mayor is not qualified to do inspections. Suzanne Stelly stated that it was voted to allow Mr. Cooney to do this work, he was voted and approved. Suzanne said that this discussion should not take place again. Jackie Cochran said that the Special Meeting is for topics on the agenda; the mayor explained to her that that is what was being discussed and the meeting was not open to the public.

Jackie objected to the way the meeting was conducted. Mayor stated that some of the things that she should be doing is not done due this legality. Mayor said that she wants to move forward with all of these properties. Jamie Huval said that he has reservations about some of this; he said he did read through some of the code book and it states that your home should be a certain amount of footage, your bedroom has to be a certain amount of square footage and etc., and most of the houses would be

in violation of the codes. Mr. Cooney said that these existing properties are grandfathered in. If a person with an existing home or building cannot be forced to come into existing codes. If a property is being renovated and they exceed 50% of the property, then it has to be up to code.

Jamie inquired about people living in campers, he said that these people should have their own meters and should not be piggy backed. Jamie feels that people should not be put out of their homes if a camper is all that they can afford. Suzanne Stelly said these codes are not to throw people out of their homes, this is an inspection process. Mr. Cooney explained that at one time someone in a neighboring town was renting a mobile home (camper) and had so much junk in the back yard, the neighbors complained about this and the issue had to be addressed per the Mayors request. Mr. Cooney explained that he does not go around looking for blighted properties, everything that has to be inspected goes through the Mayor's office. Mr. Cooney also said that piggy backing is acceptable as long as there is a backflow preventer on the water meter. Katie said legally she has a problem with selective enforcement. Jamie stated that he asked for copies of the certified letters sent to individuals, the copies were given to him. He also said that he turned in names of people to send letters out to for blighted properties and none of the letters were sent out. Katie said that her obligation is for the town, the town votes at the direction of the Mayor and the Council. She said that she does not feel comfortable with one alderman directing her to incur legal expenses on behalf of the town. She said her sending letters at their behalf needs to be voted on, she also said that back in September is when Mr. Cooney started speaking to the board about blighted property and these matters were headed in that direction. Katie said that these letters will go beyond just letters and this would have to be discussed in Executive Session about legal matters. Todd said he asked that the Town Ordinances be enforced and should not involve the attorney unless there is a legality. Mr. Cooney said that he always asks the town to adopt the International Codes. Katie stated that if you read the blighted property Ordinance the language is ambiguous it is open to interpretation about what a blighted property is. The Ordinances do need to be re-done. Katie stated that it is difficult to put these decisions on the Mayor or the board and that is why it was suggested to get Mr. Cooney involved. Mayor stated that it was discussed about the properties that Jamie wanted letters to be sent out to; she feels there was a Mis-understanding at one point that Mr. Cooney was going to take over from there. Mr. Cooney said that sending out letters on 22 properties and 22 people show up at a council meeting to address the issues the Sheriff Department would have to assist. If two or three of the worst properties are addressed word of mouth gets out to the citizens' and people will start cleaning up their own properties. Jamie stated that the two or three properties were not addressed. Katie stated that it was her understanding that Mr. Cooney was going to address these properties. Jamie stated that the council moved unanimously to move forward. Jamie stated that he does have reservations about moving forward with the permits. Jamie said there are people moving into the town and are doing a great job at fixing houses. Mr. Louis Stelly, Jr., said that he feels that Jamie is trying to find fault with the Mayor pick up bits and pieces, he and Todd. Mr. Stelly said there is three years this is going on. He said that Jamie is throwing things at the Mayor just to get her out of office. Jamie said the council asked for 3 letters to be sent out to 3 properties and said the Mr. Stelly voted as well, so did Suzanne and Annette and nothing was done about that. Suzanne Stelly said this was discussed earlier in the meeting. Mr. Stelly said this is being brought up to inform the public and blame the Mayor. Todd explained that he has neighbors that have asked him blighted properties due to having problems with rodents; he feels that it is his job as a councilman to bring these issues to the council. He said that the Ordinances are not being followed and no fines have been issued. Mr. Cooney said that the whole thing has to be enforced or you are fighting a losing battle, these properties have to be inspected. Mr. Cooney stated on a scale of one to ten the town would rate an eight as far as he is concerned. Mayor said yes there are Ordinances , not all Ordinances are being enforced they were not enforced thirty years ago, Mayor said it is time to move forward and do what is right for the town and stop living in the past. She said the key word is "communication", wipe the slate

and start over. Jamie said that is why they brought this to the board. Mayor said that is why she called this meeting she was trying to give the opportunity for everyone to get together and try to figure this out. Suzanne feels that the property that Todd is talking about is a very complicated case and perhaps have Mr. Cooney inspect this property. Suzanne said she does not know if this would be Mr. Cooney or the Attorney. Mr. Cooney said that this would probably have to be him and the attorney. Mayor said that lots of these Ordinances have to be up-dated.

Suzanne suggested putting the three main properties at the top of the list of the properties that Todd brought to the board. Mr. Cooney explained the procedure he follows while dealing with blighted property. Mr. Cooney said that anyone with a hammer or an electrical wire would be required to purchase a permit.

Todd said that he will not adopt an Ordinance until he has read the Ordinance.

Mr. Cooney stated that Municipalities are adopting what the state is saying to do.

Mayor said her point is that the board meets once a month and works on the Ordinances that needs to be put in place. Mr. Cooney said that he would like to start the progress, have the codes adopted and start using the Ordinances that Todd suggested and start correcting them when reaching certain issues. On the property maintenance changes can be made but not on the code books. Mr. Cooney said that the appeals board is the town council.

It was suggested to have a meeting on Monday, January 22, 2018 then it was suggested to schedule a meeting the night of the Regular Town Meeting on January 23, 2018 then it was scheduled a week from Monday which is January 22, 2018, no vote was taken.

Citizens' Concern

Glenn Colon suggested making the town's people aware of when a new Ordinance is in place.

He also suggested different avenues that could be taken about blighted property.

Jackie Cochran objected to the meeting procedure.

Mayor stated that the town does not have the man power to keep up these blighted properties.

Adjourn

Todd Meche motioned to adjourn the Regular Town Meeting seconded by Jamie Huval, unanimously carried.

Attest:

Dolores R. Quebedeaux, Town Clerk

Kathy M. Richard, Mayor