



Legislation Text

File #: 22-018, **Version:** 1

LAND USE

Subject/Application:

Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Background:

The purpose for the LUPPW Committee to review the status of Blight issues was to monitor how effective Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) 300-012 "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*" was and to see if the Ordinance needed to be adjusted.

Meeting Action Detail:

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 06/05/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Director of Land Use Juliet Hodge stated that she has been working with Zoning Enforcement Officer Mr. Alex Samalot to address the list of outstanding Blighted Properties. She stated three Citations were issued to the following property owners noting that the costs to remedy the blighted properties were \$69,000; \$13,000, & \$1,000:

- 11 Colonel Ledyard Highway
- 22 Anderson
- 528 Colonel Ledyard Highway, was not picking up their mail.

Ms. Hodge stated two of the property owners have contacted the Planning & Zoning Office to schedule an appointment. She stated that they would continue to work to keep the list moving, noting that she thought that they would be able to see some progress in addressing the blighted properties.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 05/01/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Director of Land Use Juliet Hodge provided a Blight Report which was distributed and attached to the Agenda on the meeting portal for tonight's meeting. She stated the new Zoning Enforcement Officer Mr. Alex Samalot began today, noting that he was currently enrolled in the Connecticut Association of Zoning Enforcement (CAZEO) Certification Program. She stated because he was not already CAZEO Certified that there would be a significant amount of training involved. She stated that Mr. Samalot's first assignments would be to take on the List of the Blighted Properties and Junk/Unregistered motor vehicle cases. She stated Ledyard had a lot of enforcement issues that needed to be addressed noting that the former Zoning Enforcement Officer John Herring retired in December, 2022 and the position has been vacant for a number of months.

Ms. Hodge continued by noting Ordinance #300-012 (rev. 1) "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*". She stated although the Ordinance was well written she had questions regarding the Blight Enforcement Officer and the Citation Hearing Committee. She suggested rather than have a Blight Ordinance that blight should be addressed in the Zoning Regulations, or the Ordinance should name the Zoning Enforcement Officer as the Blight Enforcement Officer. She stated in reviewing past Blight Issues that there were people she did not know that were serving as the Blight Enforcement Officer. She also questioned if the Zoning Enforcement Officer was issuing a Blight Letter whether they would sign the letter as the Zoning Enforcement Officer or the Blight Enforcement Officer.

Administrative Assistant Roxanne Maher explained Ordinance #300-012 (rev. 1) "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*" (revised updated in 2019) was nearly identical to the City of Groton's Blight Ordinance, which has been tested and has stood up in court. She noted per the Ordinance the Blight Enforcement Officer does not have to be the Zoning Enforcement Officer, but that they could be Zoning Enforcement Officer, in which case the person would be wearing two hats and would sign blight letters as the Blight Enforcement Officer, noting that there

were a number of employees who perform multiple roles in Ledyard. She also explained that the Citation Hearing Committee would be stood up when needed, similar to the Architectural Review Board. She stated Ordinance #300-012 (rev. 1) was written to provide flexibility in who could serve at the Blight Enforcement Officer; and so, that it would not be limited to the person having to be the Zoning Enforcement Official. She stated that this was purposely done for a variety of reasons. She stated per the Ordinance the Mayor would appoint the Blight Enforcement Officer, noting at one time it was Mayor Rodolico's executive assistant Mark Bancroft and that there were others, who were not the Zoning Enforcement Officer, that has served in that role.

Ms. Juliet Hodge went on to explain if a property becomes uninhabitable and was condemned that under Connecticut's **Uniform Relocation Assistance Act** (CGS § 8-266), individuals and businesses who were displaced from their place of residence as a result of the state or local government code enforcement activities that caused them to be displaced that the state or town was required to provide comparable living. She stated that the town currently did not have a budget for these types of expenses.

Councilor Paul questioned how long the town would have to provide/pay to relocate displaced individuals. Ms. Hodge stated although she has not read the entire **Relocation Assistance Act** (CGS § 8-266) that the town would have to pay for the relocation expenses until the property became habitual again. She noted as an example that if a home was condemned because the boiler was not working that once the boiler was repaired/replaced that the people would return to their home.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 04/03/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: No Action

[Minute Note](#)

No Action

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 03/06/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: No Action

Minute Note

Councilor Marshall stated that there were no outstanding issues and there has been no enforcement of blight matters. Therefore, he stated the LUPPW Committee had nothing to discuss.

Action: No Action

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 02/06/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: Continued

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated the purpose of keeping the enforcement of regulations to address blight issues on the Committee's Agenda was to monitor how effective Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) was; and to see if the Ordinance needed to be adjusted. Therefore, he questioned whether the Ordinance was effective as written.

Chairman Dombrowski noted at the LUPPW Committee January 9, 2023 meeting that Mayor Allyn, III, stated he thought the provisions provided in Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) were effective. Therefore, he questioned whether the LUPPW Committee felt the need to keep this item on their agenda. He explained that Ledyard was one of the first towns to adopt an Ordinance to address blighted properties. He stated since the Ordinance was initially adopted in 2013 that it was revised in 2019 to include some language that Groton had in their Ordinance, noting that Groton's Ordinance has been tested in court and held up.

Chairman Dombrowski went on to state in reviewing past Zoning Enforcement Officer's Blight Reports that the town has been able to get voluntary compliance from most property owners, without having to take further action, which they were authorized to take, per the Ordinance.

He stated because the Land Use Department Office has been short staffed that the quarterly Blight Property Reports

have not been provided on a regular basis. However, he explained that the Town Council only had authority to change the Ordinance, which they have not been asked to do, and that the enforcement authority lied with the Blight Officer. Therefore, he questioned whether the LUPPW Committee felt the need to continue to carry this item on their agenda as Old Business.

Councilor Marshall stated when the Land Use Department was fully staffed he recalled former Zoning Enforcement Office Kyle Favolise knocking on doors and talking to the property owners about cleaning up their property. He stated Mr. Favolise had some good success with getting voluntary compliance using the tools provided in Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1).

Councilor Paul stated it appeared that Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) *“An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard”* was working fine. Therefore, he questioned based on Chairman Dombrowski’s and Councilor Marshall’s comments whether the LUPPW Committee would like to remove this item from their Old Business agenda, noting that the Committee often times skips over the item because there was nothing to discuss. He stated the Committee could revisit this item should they find that there was an issue with the Ordinance, or when they receive the quarterly Blight Reports for review.

Councilor Rodriguez stated that she would like to keep the *“Enforcement of regulations to address blight issues”* on the Agenda because she was interested in seeing the quarterly reports.

Councilor Marshall stated that the LUPPW Committee could continue to receive the quarterly Blight Reports without having to carry the item on their Old Business agenda.

By consensus the LUPPW Committee agreed to *“Enforcement of regulations to address blight issues”* on the Agenda under Old Business.

Action: Continued

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 01/09/2023:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: No Action

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated the purpose of keeping the regulations to address blight issues on the Committee’s Agenda was to monitor how effective Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) was; and to see if the Ordinance needed to be adjusted.

Mayor Allyn, III, stated he thought the provisions provided in Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) were effective. He stated Zoning Enforcement Officer/Blight Officer John Herring retired on December 31, 2022 and that the town was actively working to fill the position. He stated prior to his resignation Mr. Herring issued a numberer of *Notice of Blight Violations*. He stated some of the violations were substantial and that a number of properties have come into compliance. However, he stated that there were still some properties that required a lot of work for them to come

into compliance.

Councilor Rodriguez addressed the time to hire a new Zoning Enforcement Officer and she questioned during the interim whether Mr. Mike Cherry would be willing to once again step-in as the Interim Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Mayor Allyn explained that Zoning Enforcement Officer/Blight Officer John Herring retired a little earlier than he had initially planned too was because the State passed Legislation that required all Zoning Enforcement Officers to be Connecticut Association of Zoning Enforcement (CAZEO) Certified by January 1, 2023. He stated although Mr. Herring was not CAZEO Certified that he was very good and knew the job. He went on to explain CAZEO was a 100% Volunteer Organization and that CAZEO was inundated with people who needed to get their certification, after the Legislation was passed. He explained that the CAZEO Registration was limited to 40 people, with a first come, first serve enrollment. He stated because CAZEO could not accommodate all those who needed the education by January 1, 2023, that there were a lot of people who were working as Zoning Enforcement Officials that could not receive the Certification to meet the new Legislation. He went on to explain that Legislation has already been proposed to extend the January 1, 2023 CAZEO Certification deadline date to 2024 or 2025. Therefore, he stated Mr. Cherry would not be returning to serve as the Interim Zoning Enforcement Officer, noting that this piece of Legislation has put a wrinkle in terms of trying to fill these types of municipal land use positions.

Action: Discussed

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 12/05/2022:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: Discussed

Minute Note:

Councilor Rodriguez noted at the LUPPW Committee's November 7, 2022 meeting that Land Use Director Juliet Hodge stated in working to address blighted properties that they found that Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*" needed to be updated.

Chairman Dombrowski stated the main reason there has not been much Blight Enforcement activity was because the Land Use Department has been short staffed for a quite some time. He went on to note that the reasons the LUPPW Committee had this item on their agenda was:

- To be aware of whether blight issues were being identified and addressed, not to necessarily be informed of the location, etc.; and
- To monitor how effective Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) was; and to see if the Ordinance needed to be adjusted.

Chairman Dombrowski continued by stating that the goal in addressing blighted properties was to obtain voluntary compliance, without having to invoke the provisions in the Ordinance. He went on to state that fortunately most property

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owners were coming into compliance voluntarily, once they were notified that their property was in violation of the Blight Ordinance.

Action: Discussed

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 11/07/2022:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: No Action

Minute Note:

Chairman Dombrowski stated Zoning Enforcement Officer Tom Weber has provided a Blight Report for tonight's meeting.

Land Use Director Juliet Hodge stated that there has been a lot of blight activity. She stated in working to address blighted properties that they found that Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*" needed to be updated.

Chairman Dombrowski stated the reason the blight issues has been included on the LUPPW Committee's agenda was mostly to monitor how effective Ordinance #300-012 (rev 1) was and to see if the Ordinance needed to be adjusted.

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 10/03/2022:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.

Action: No Action

Minute Note:

Councilor Paul stated Blight Reports would be provided on a quarterly basis.

Action: No Action

Land Use/Planning/Public Works Committee Meeting 9/13/2022:

File #: [22018](#) Version: 1

Type: Land Use

Title: Continued discussion regarding the progress of enforcing regulations to address blight issues.
Action: No Action

Action: No Action

Minute Notes:

The LUPPW Committee noted that the Zoning Official would be providing Blight Reports on a quarterly basis, which would help the Committee determine whether Ordinance # 300-011 (rev.1) "*An Ordinance Concerning Blight and Public Nuisance for the Town of Ledyard*" was continuing to be effective.

LUPPW Cmt Meeting 8/1/2022

File #: [22018 <https://ledyardct.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5814186&GUID=E2C7069F-CBA6-4209-A4C0-5F8D44613280>](https://ledyardct.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5814186&GUID=E2C7069F-CBA6-4209-A4C0-5F8D44613280) Version: 1

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Action: No Action 

Minute Note: No Action

Action: No Action