

## Safety Committee Minutes

Honorable Council  
City of Newark, Ohio  
July 6, 2020

The Safety Committee met via Zoom steamed live on YouTube on Monday, July6, 2020 with these members in attendance:

Mark Labutis- Chair  
Spencer Barker – Vice-chair  
Jeremy Blake  
Sean Fennell  
Jeff Rath

We wish to report:

1. Consider **Resolution No. 20-47** A RESOLUTION INQUIRING ON CITY AFFAIRS RELATED TO THE EFFORTS TO ADDRESS UNSHELTERED HOMELESSNESS

**Mr. Blake** – The resolution I brought forth tonight is my hope as members of council to have a discussion on the issue of unsheltered homelessness in our city. I see using this resolution more as a tool to have this discussion than anything at this point because I don't think we as a group have had a real discussion about homelessness so that is my intent tonight. It seems to me that there are residents and organizations that continue to seek direction about how to care for the homeless population. I met last month with the American Legion because they are concerned about the homeless taking up residence between their facility and the railroad tracks. I've had calls and emails with concerns about all of the homeless camps in various locations mostly near the Raccoon Creek and Licking River. I'm curious how others are handling calls they are receiving and what should be the standard for handling these calls.

**Mr. Labutis** – I personally have not received any calls regarding homelessness.

**Mr. Barker** – I also have not personally received any calls regarding homeless issues. I believe the Newark Development Partners have spearheaded a plan to help address this situation. I would push that we continue to support NDP to develop a structured plan to deal with this issue.

**Mr. Fennell** – I have had several calls from concerned constituents, some of them repeated, mostly about people going down into the space where the creek runs under Hudson Avenue. I hope that we are able to continue to have discussions to ensure that we are trying to take care of all of our citizens.

**Mr. Rath** – I will echo Mr. Labutis and Mr. Barker that I have not had any calls or complaints about the homeless issue. I want to reiterate the point I've made in previous conversations, that we have a lot of services with people that want to help. I think the biggest problem is coordinating the efforts. I think what the NDP is doing is a very progressive step to coordinate efforts and I think to throw another hand in the pot would be a mistake.

**Mr. Labutis** – I'm getting a note that we have someone calling in.

**Mr. Barker** – Caller if you could state your name and address for the record please.

**Nancy Welu** – 7441 Stewart Road, I've been involved with the Newark Homeless Outreach. During the pandemic most services were shut down. Maybe Director Rhodes can share with the public what he shared with all of you regarding the Newark Development Partners. I basically, would like to know what all of you think are your responsibilities to the homeless citizens during a pandemic.

**Mr. Blake** – I guess what I'm trying to figure out is what is the preferred method to centralize these calls that we receive.

**Mr. Rath** – I wonder if it would be appropriate to have someone come in from the Newark Development Partners to address the city council and what we can do to help.

**Director Rhodes** – The NDP identified that there was a growing population of homeless people within the city, then we identified a need for a building, so we went out and found dollars to purchase a building. Now we've identified a need for professional guidance on a build out for the building as well as operations of the building. I don't believe the City of Newark should operate a homeless shelter, but I think we should be part of a solution. Part of our solution is working with the economic development arm of the city, Newark Development Partners, so we brought a building in, we raised money to have professionals give us guidance on a build-out and how to operate it. The next challenge is raising funds to do the build-out and then the operational costs. Various groups have been contacted to enter into that discussion. AS far as who to contact, Director Baum and I are contacted when there is a need. If it's a service need, like having an abandoned homeless camp cleaned up, we contact the Health Department to make sure it's okay to clean it up and we clean it up. Director Baum gets calls and handles them when someone is causing problems. There is no one point of contact, but you do have a Service Department and Safety Department that are engaged. T he biggest issue moving forward is funding to take care of the issues.

**Mr. Labutis** – We do have another call, please state your name and address for the record.

**Leesha Furias** – 116 Smithview Dr, Heath, Ohio ,I'm with the Newark City Task Force on Poverty and am concerned with the eviction hearings and lack of affordable housing it seems to me that we need to address this because it's a growing proem. There is nowhere for the homeless to go. I am asking for transparency and interest on the part of all of the city council this is a community problem.

**Director Rhodes** – NDP doesn't want to run a homeless facility, we are just trying to be a part of the solution. It's going to take cooperation from the entire community.

**Mr. Lang** – I've not had any calls regarding unsheltered issues either, but I'm a little frustrated. I think we have thrown a piece of what I consider poorly written legislation on the agenda here tonight rather than just having a discussion.

**Mr. Blake** – I have found the discussion very helpful. My intent wasn't to move legislation forward, but to have a discussion. I hope we can get some kind of update for council so we can remain engaged.

**Mr. Labutis** – We will not be moving this legislation on to full council and then this will conclude our Safety Committee Meeting.

Mark Labutis, Chair