

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
of November 15, 2021

In Attendance: **Vermilion City Council:**
Steve Herron, President of Council; Monica Stark, Council at Large; F. Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Hologacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five. Absent: Emily Skahen, Ward One

Administration:
Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Susan Anderson, Law Director; Tony Valerius, Service Director

Call to Order: Monica Stark, Chairwoman, RESOLVED THAT this Legislative Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE: Outdoor Residential Lighting

F. Loucka explained that he put this issue on the agenda to address a request from a resident in Ward Two who indicated she is being harassed by at least one neighbor that shines their yard lights directly into their home and deck. The residents have appealed to the police department and the service department for relief. However, it turns out the city has no ordinance regulating “Annoying Lighting”. He said Gwen Fisher has started following up on legislation from other communities and Westlake has some limited ordinances, but mainly for commercial. He said Bedford Heights has a fairly complete ordinance as well as a few others in Illinois. He asked if council was willing to pursue legislation of this type because they would have to acquire a light meter. He brought this up at the request of this resident and asked council if they wanted Gwen to pursue additional legislation and put something together at a committee meeting.

Juanita Szymanski of 5549 Ingleside Avenue said she has the problem with the light being on her house and being lit up, and she doesn’t want it lit up. She said Jim Life has all his lights on her house and she has pictures. The whole back of her house is lit up and the girls that live next to him have a spotlight that doesn’t move at all, and it stays right on their house, then they have a guy across the street and when sitting in their living room he flashes on these LED lights, and it just lights up their whole living room. They literally had to put sunglasses on, so they just want it to stop and get them off of their house, so they can enjoy their back yard. They have only lived there 3 ½ years and these people have been just a nuisance with these lights, and they have been picking on them. Especially, Jim Life – he has been picking on them ever since they put up a privacy fence. They love this place and their house, but they cannot enjoy their yard or their front porch, or their back yard. If he finds anything else, he hits them with the lights and gets all his five dogs barking at 4:00 to 6:00 a.m. All they want him to do is to leave them alone, so they can enjoy their house. They are almost to the point of putting it up for sale and moving, but they do not want to do that because they love living here and they love their house, but

he will just not leave them alone. They have asked the girls if they could get the light off their house – no go! The kid across the street – no go! He has talked to Bill the Building Inspector, and he has talked to them and has asked them – didn't work. So, she does not know what else to do. She is getting frustrated, and she just wants to enjoy her yard and her house. She can't walk in her back yard because she is afraid Jim Life is staring at her. She has no privacy with him. Of course, one day she was about ready to give him something to see, but she didn't to be respectful.

M. Stark said she has driven by quite a few evenings since she saw the email come through that they were going to be discussing this. She noticed lights in back yards and lights shining out of their back yard as well as into their back yard J. Szymanski said just to get back at them to see what they are doing to them, they did put up a spotlight – a 250 watt one and blasted it at both of them, but it didn't do nothing, so they turned it off. M. Stark said as far as the front of the house she did not notice anyone having a spotlight shining, she just noted there was regular house lights. J. Szymanski said these lights are on his garage and they are really bright and everyone else has amber lights or low lights. When he turns them on it just shoots right through their living room. M. Stark said she lives in a neighborhood in the community too and has neighbors that have LED lights that come on automatically with motion, and she just pulls her blinds when lights come on. J. Szymanski said they do this too, but they like to sit on their front porch at night. M. Stark said as far as the light show in the back yard she agrees as she has driven by and has seen them shining every which direction. She didn't know if council wanted to move forward with asking Gwen to look at legislation to review or wait to see if one neighbor shuts their lights off then another may follow suit. She would hope they could just agree to get along, but she knows this doesn't always happen. J. Szymanski said they have tried and put up a privacy fence but he just does this with his lights and his dogs, and then he got mad because twice a year she sprays weed killer on her gravel because she has 3" which Jim is fighting her on, and he complained and called the cops on her and finally the Chief of Police says there is an ordinance that says she can go back there, well then all the lighting started because she won on this part. He will find one thing after another to pick on them and they have done everything to ask him to just get the lights off and let them enjoy their yard – and the same with the girls.

B. Brady said if they fix the lights, then he will find something else. J. Szymanski said he will and they are going back and forth with this guy – they are the second owners of this house and what the neighbors told them is that he has been fighting with the Berry's and they went to their grave with this fighting, so now he has started picking on them and they got tired of him coming into their back yard, so this is why the privacy fence went up, but then he decided he was going to drain water into their yard. It is one thing after another with this guy and the girls they don't want to take orders from anybody, so she called her councilman to see what she could do. She just wants him to leave them alone and quit picking on them. They are very nice and respectful, and they want to enjoy their house.

F. Loucka said if council is agreeable they can review the several communities Gwen provided to them. He said Bedford Heights seems pretty thorough and noted it has to be measurable, and their ordinance mentions the measurements involved. He encouraged council to put an ordinance together to discuss it at the next legislative meeting.

F. Loucka MOVED, S. Holovacs seconded to have legislation drafted. Discussion: S. Herron said you cannot legislate everything. If someone acts like a jerk – there is always two sides to every story and there are some civil remedies, but he will think about this, but there is a thing of over legislating. M. Stark agreed 100% - she will look at this, but she doesn't want to over legislate. Why should they put legislation in place for the whole community to follow and for the administration to try to enforce? Vote 6 YEAS. **MOTION CARRIED**.

M. Stark adjourned the meeting upon no further discussion.

Next meeting: December 13, 2021 – 6pm @ Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street (Immediately following a Public Hearing and Special City Council Meeting).

Transcribed by Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC)