



TCC Minutes

Committees: Mobility, Sustainability, & Beautification / Housing & Community Development

Date + Time: 8/7/25, 4:30pm

Location: City Council Chambers

Attendees: Chair Gadus, Driscoll, Williams, Sarantou

Absentees: Chair Komives, Hartman, Jones, Martinez, McPherson

Also Present:

Presenters: Megan Robson, Sara Stacy, Ryan Murphy, Rochelle Bowen, Matt Killam

Public Attendance: 23

Facilitating: Evan Snapp

Topics...

- Trash & Blight
- Grass
- Trees

Discussion...

- Gadus: I call to order this joint meeting of the Housing and Mobility committees. Clerk please call the roll. We will begin with the Department of Public Services on the topic of trash and blight.
- Robson: Good afternoon members of council, I'm Megan Robson, the Director of the Dept. of Public Services. I'm starting with an overview of the responsibilities of DPS, which includes Facility and Fleet Operations, Urban Beautification, Solid Waste. Today, we are specifically going to talk about our Clean Toledo Team, blight statistics. This slide shows our data on non-compliant bulk pickups, total property clean ups, and repeat bulk pickups. City crews run a schedule that is two days behind Republic's trash schedule and one day behind their bulk pickup. When there is a noncompliant bulk pickup, Republic alerts us of the location, and Urban Beautification will create a new work order for that pick up. We have the data for these categories for the years 2023 and 2024, and up to July of this year.
- Gadus: What is the difference between a noncompliant bulk pickup and a property clean up?
- Robson: The noncompliant pickups aren't following Republic's rules, say it has boards with nails sticking out. Republic will call the property owner to alert them how to fix it, but if they do not then comply, it goes to the City. A property clean up is for non-pickup blight on a property.



TCC Minutes

- Bowen: I'm here to answer any questions, issues or concerns on behalf of Republic Services, and I'm joined by our General Manager. It is a challenging time for us, with a brief interruption in service this week. But we are glad to be here.
- Gadus: Probably the most frequent complaint we get, as district council members, is about bulk pickups. I personally go around my district street by street and count setouts/ bulk pickups and try to match my findings with data from Urban Beautification's pickups. I have found approximately 500 piles of trash on streets each time I go do this audit. I have also found repeat piles from month-to-month that have 'slipped through the cracks'. That is one of my reasons for bringing this issue in front of council.
- Williams: I am tired of having the same conversation year after year, regarding piles of trash that are underreported and forgotten about. Every week in May, we were reporting the concerns of our residents about bulk pickups not picked up. Often, Republic is saying they are non-compliant when I believe the piles are pristine. Then we have to put a fine on the property owner that they don't deserve. I will say that Rochelle and Cheryl are very responsive and helpful, but this remains a huge issue. Trash and grass are what we get called about the most.
- Gadus: We are going to take a couple of minutes to hear public comments on trash and blight. Our clerk will read the names, and you will have 3 minutes to speak on this topic. We will log your complaints.
- Leslie Eff: I live in East Toledo, my issue with trash and blight is that we get trash that blows down from the streets and the high-level bridge. It gets caught in the vegetation but isn't picked up- so I personally go out to do an alley clean and clean up other areas when they get bad. My concern is I'm a resident, and my tax dollars are not going to where they need to if I personally have to go out and clean up my neighborhood. Our trash and recycling was not picked up today. My neighbor's setout was not picked up for two weeks.
- Larry Lanting: I'm an Eastside resident, my children and I clean up a lot of trash and blight, and clean up graffiti, etc. I know not all neighbors know each other, but for me, the neighbors on my street are large industrial companies. I have to clean my grass and my yard, but those companies will not do it. I'm forced to do the cutting and cleaning on my own and with my family just to control rodents and bugs, to make it safe for kids. The other thing is- at the Dollar General down the street, they've let a broken concrete pillar lay on the ground for two years, this million-dollar company doesn't fix it, and they need to be fined until they do so.
- Gary Lenhart: I'm going to try to do this in three minutes. I'm thankful to have this opportunity to talk about the many issues around blight. I'd like to provide some solutions and back it up with data I've collected. I submitted a letter three years ago to my city council member about blight and trash. For decades, I haven't been able to have a family event without blight on my street. This includes vacant properties, setouts,



TCC Minutes

dead trees, etc. The 05 was hit hard by the financial crash of 2009. Over the time I've been a community leader in East Toledo, I've met many great people who want to advocate for our community. One of those people is Pat Jones, whose testimony I will read now: I believe all landlords should be required to educate their tenants on how to properly request bulk pickup. The city should also be sending notices. Now, I am planning to leave East Toledo and the city I've lived in for years. Others are upset by the cars parked in our grass, only halfway in the street. Some are upset by the sidewalks, which are often inaccessible to wheelchair users. I personally have created a database of setouts and blight since 2023. Presently, there are more than 1000 properties that I track, and thousands of open code compliance issues. Presently my data shows 639 East Toledo properties with open, action issues. There are 171 burnt homes, but only 46 are on the demo list. At least 100 need to be demolished. I want to submit the whole package of the data I've collected to council, DPS and Republic Services. We need to figure out a plan to fix these problems in a more efficient way.

- Gadus: One thing I've noticed in my own audits are large items like couches, beds, tv's, that don't get picked up. Could you speak to this, Rochelle?
- Bowen: Often, our drivers err on caution when driving down blocked or double-parked streets. That's probably what is happening.
- Gadus: One thing that is in the contract, Republic has the right to tow vehicles blocking the accessibility of the street. How many times have you towed vehicles?
- Bowen: I don't believe we've done that this year.
- Candace Kirshner: Good afternoon, I'm an East Toledo resident. I'm a habitual government-caller. I have some issues with Republic but also with the City. I believe there should be more council members sitting at this table today. This problem is on more than Republic, but the City and the Mayor. He doesn't seem to want to keep us safe. There are rat problems and aesthetic issues. There are taxes owed on many of these blighted homes, but how do they keep getting away with this? Lived-in homes have far higher standards, so I feel that the law-abiding citizens are treated worse than the absentee owners. I feel that it is more than the people in this room that are responsible for these problems. We only have one blight crew in East Toledo, it should be more. When is it time for us to have more accountability?
- Bowen: We respond immediately to City issues, I am part of the boots on the ground in Toledo. Republic Services has an online reporting system called Track my Truck, which is going to be fully rolled out this year. I can follow up with council on how we can utilize this technology district-wide and for the utility of the City officials.
- Gadus: We can now move onto Grass.
- Sara Stacy: Hi, I'm the commissioner of Urban Beautification. The mowing schedule is from April 21- July 31 on a weekly mowing basis. From August to October 31, the mowing schedule is biweekly. There are a different number of contracts on parcels for Right of Ways, Parks and Neighborhoods/ Opportunity Lots, which are detailed in the



TCC Minutes

presentation. We also show the assessed vs. collected NUAB (nuisance abatement) fees in '22, '23, and '24. The assessments rose but the collections fell in the last year we have all the data for, 2023. 2024's fees will be assessed next year. The mowing budget has been cut, so we have a smaller number of contractors and more work to do.

- Williams: One issue I know that causes more problems for our equipment and its upkeep, is that the grass will be cut when its long, but they don't clean the equipment and it loses its useful life.
- Robson: We have to have in-person training with our contractors now, that includes upkeep, picking out litter, and other useful training that will control the quality more on the lots. The debris or broken items you spoke of, we encourage them to scan mowable areas for these so that the job is done better.
- Robson: To help save on our budget, we have reduced the number of mows we do, but we are steadily gaining more vacant lots that need mowed, so the land area, you could say is growing. Some of our best contractors have raised their properties. ARPA funding allowed for over a thousand properties to be demolished, but all of those properties become our responsibility to mow. One solution for this is for neighbors to 'adopt a lot'. We are trying to reduce while still keeping the grass mowed.
- Gadus: How do we charge our contractors?
- Robson: There is a cost per square foot they mow.
- Gadus: One of my concerns, is that I see issues with quality control. Our own city teams are phenomenal, but our contractors are not approaching the jobs with the same intention. Fences are not weed-whipped, the grass is not collected, but instead blown out into the street. Is there a way to report, as a citizen, to report these type of error-riddled jobs.
- Stacy: Yes, we want those issues reported. We hold them to the standards in their RFP. That is why the Quality Controllers are so important.
- Bianca Lanting: I just wanted to address the issue of kids walking to school where there is really long grass. Kids could fall, or walk through tall yards where they can trip. It's unsafe. Another thing is the bugs in the tall grass. If they avoid that, they might walk in the road.
- Leslie Eff: I live on Clark Street, we have a total of five (grass) islands and several right of ways along Woodville Road. We have had contractors cut these spaces for years, but they are not identifiable. Sometimes my driveway is blocked by these vehicles and their trailers. I want to echo the issues with these contractors that other people have said. They are hard to deal with and they don't care much about quality. I have to step up to take care of my neighborhood so it gets done right. I think they should have to take pictures before and after, because sometimes I think they're getting paid for my work. I argue with them to cut the whole required lot.
- Robson: All the contractors do have to submit before and after photos, and then our Quality Controllers check the sites before they get paid. We have had contractors that



TCC Minutes

we relieved them of some of their duties because they were not reliable. In the case of these sites on Woodville Road, I'd be happy to look into that specifically.

- Eff: One quick thing, I am a quality engineer in my career. I would say that your QC's are not necessarily ensuring the level of quality is consistent.
- Manuel Mathis: Good evening Council, I don't want to be an echo chamber. I want to thank Gary Lenhart and Mary Wilson, who are good leaders in East Toledo. One of the byproducts of the poorly cut grass, is the rodents. Are there any proactive measures to deal with rats, which is a social and a health concern. There could be some more clarity for residents on how to deal with these issues. The tall grass is a safety concern that blocks pedestrians' views, especially in one spot by the train tracks. We deserve due diligence from our City. Thank you Councilmembers.
- Robson: The health department is who we work with for rodent abatement, especially at our demolition properties. We are trying to find better solutions than what has been going on. We are looking at other cities and other alternatives, which will begin with a meeting at the end of this month held by Dr. Councilwoman Jones.
- Williams: Trash is one of the biggest drivers of the rat problems. There was an exterminator hired to clean up Pearl Street, but they couldn't even try to exterminate rats with all the trash left out. And thank you Manny.
- Gadus: Now we're going to move on to Forestry.
- Stacy: Forestry is under the Division of Urban Beautification, and is funded mostly by assessed fees city-wide, based on property frontage. We have additional support from the RE-TREE grant, ARPA funds, and our sale of mulch. In the spring, we planted nearly 4,000 trees in the City. That is one of the strongest seasons ever in Toledo. We have a 1:1 replacement policy, meaning we will never cut down more trees than we plant. Next year, we are considering contracting out our Pruning services. We want to follow a 7-year cycle for pruning, but other cities have starting lengthening that cycle, against best industry practices. We also try to follow a 12-month schedule for removing tree stumps, meaning they should be removed within a year of receiving the work order. There is a lot of tree debris involved in property cleanups and demolitions, which our teams also work on. Maintenance of street trees is our 'bread and butter'. Just like streets, our trees are a piece of public infrastructure that is important to the health of our city and have numerous benefits.
- Gadus: We have less tree canopy than the city of Las Vegas, which is mind-blowing to me. So this is a very important issue to me. What are we doing to prevent tree deaths and how can residents report this?
- Stacy: We definitely want that feedback, because there are several reasons a tree would die, and the information we gain helps us improve practices and keep more trees alive and healthy. We can further discuss incentives, but we like to encourage proper upkeep by the neighbors or residents with public trees near their property.



TCC Minutes

- Sarantou: Commissioner, how many trees have yet to be trimmed, or are on the waiting list? And what is the estimated time for tree trimming from complaint to completion? By referral.
- Gadus: Now for public comments on trees and forestry.
- Cayden Lanting: I used to ride my bike to school, and I would often encounter trees with huge overgrowth that covers the sidewalk, which was a bad hazard. Or trees that drop fruit that rots right there on the sidewalk. It attracts bees and rodents, and makes it hard to ride there.
- Blair Johnson: I stay on Woodsdale, just shy of Arlington. I have a perspective on trees. I think there should be more conversation with the property owners that will get trees. The placement of the trees could be better in reference to the houses and obstacles in the neighborhood. We want good visibility from inside the house and also for driving down the road. I don't think we're focusing on our older trees and their maintenance. That maintenance gets deferred, or forgotten. Sometimes branches die, and fall, and are a health hazard. The new trees are important, but so is evaluating the state of the older trees.
- Gadus: Those are thoughtful suggestions, thank you. Commissioner, is there a way of working with Marcomms to spread education about how to assess the health of their older trees, or identify dead trees?
- Stacy: We are working to provide that information through a variety of channels.
- Sarah Abts: I'm here about a specific place in Highland Park. I was happy last year when the crews came to the corner of Woodsdale and South. A tree that was cut was hiding a patch of poison ivy, which has now taken over the area, and spreading toward my garden. I can't take it out. Is there any hope that forestry services can address this space?
- Robson: We recommend that you log this request properly through Engage Toledo, which will create a trackable work order. We do deal with poison ivy patches from time to time.
- Gadus: We've reached the end of trees, so we will move on to general commentary.
- William Farnsell: Thank you Council, I am with Neighborworks. I have a few things to talk about today. I'm happy to report that we have had our contract extended another four months, thanks to the advocacy of Council and the Housing Department. I also asked the committee to consider releasing the debt on our Year 16 housing loans. The city needs to do the right thing and pay off the debt on these mortgages which helps our homeowners and our housing stock. 19 counties in the Northwest Ohio district will compete for two tax credit projects each year, and we believe that Toledo should fight for this tax credit financing program, and make a competitive proposal.
- Williams: Thank you for being here. With regard to the loan forgiveness, we need to make use of the committee hearing to educate the council and the community on this



TCC Minutes

topic. I am hopeful that the administration will explain their stance, I'll explain mine, and you yours. I appreciate you and look forward to that discussion.

- Sarantou: I want to thank you for your organization, which helps to strengthen neighborhoods.
- Gary Lenhart: Thank you Council. I wanted to make a couple suggestions about what might strengthen the blight situation and trash pickup. I personally don't feel that Republic services has the capacity to provide what this community needs. The waiting and frustrated residents have big problems with bulk pickups. If we hire our own team to focus on each NRSA neighborhood, they could go back more frequently and do it more often than once a summer, or once every two summers. I would also recommend that our new trash provider go back to street sweeping. Sweeping plus trash pickup, plus Urban Beautification team working in tandem would be much better than our approach right now.
- Bree Hitchin: I'm here on behalf of fellow downtown property owners, and we are opposed to the expansion of the DTID taxable area. ConnecToledo did not have the necessary 60% signatures to put forward this proposal. The plan has been riddled with bias and conflicts of interest. The assessment fails its most important aspect- to provide benefit equivalent to the cost. We are working and living downtown, hoping to improve our neighborhood and City. This is unwanted taxation without representation. I believe this resolution is invalid. If ConnecToledo wants this extra tax money, they should redo their process and start over. Delay voting and allow us the opportunity to speak more meaningfully on this topic.
- Catherine Schline: I am going to add what Breanna said, this has been an ongoing problem to convince the City Council that ConnecToledo's process has been flawed. People living in the downtown and warehouse district have been strong supporters of these districts, and many have been residents for decades. We will continue to promote development, but we believe there is a better way to go about it, than the current proposal in front of council. On June 18th, we received letters from the Clerk of Council with the details of this proposal. We challenge the legal amount of time that was required before the early July meeting. We don't understand the mapping of the expanded district, and why certain locations were excluded or included.
- Fanny Effler: Thank you so much Council. I'm from the Old Towne Neighborhood Association. We are spending far too much money maintaining our abandoned and vacant properties. We have been sending these in our neighborhood to the Auditor for tax delinquency, and I believe this is the best way to solve this problem. Some are worth mowing, but not as many as we do now. A partnership with housing court would go a long way. More tax foreclosures would improve the community and relieve this financial burden.