



City of Clarksville
Restoring Clarksville Initiative 2025 Task Force

August 26, 2025, at 4:00 PM
City Hall 4th Floor Conference Room
1 Public Square
Clarksville, Tennessee

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Councilperson Deanna McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 4:00 PM.

2. Attendance

PRESENT:

Deanna McLaughlin - Committee Chairman, City Councilman, Ward 2
Joe Pitts - City of Clarksville Mayor
Caleb Lane - President, Mayor's Youth Council
Justin Crosby - Director, Building & Codes Department
Jason Gregory - Building & Codes Department
Jimmy Settle - Communications Director
Silas Matchem - Clarksville Montgomery County Regional Planning Commission
Kyleigh Koyama - APSU Emerging Leaders
Matthew Armstrong, Legal Department
Mike Reed - Assistant Chief, Clarksville Fire Rescue
Bob Kendrick - Building & Codes Department
Kathrine Killebrew, City Forester
Viola Sykes - Finance Department
Sonny Emmert - Clarksville Street Department
Michael Palmore - Director, Building Maintenance & Parking
Valerie Ogle - Building & Codes Department
Scott Thornton - Deputy Chief, Clarksville Police Department
Jesse Ramsey - TDOT
Michelle Austin - Director, Clarksville Neighborhood & Community Services

ABSENT:

Lauren Winters, City Grants Director
James Halford - Chief of Staff
Christen Wilcox, Interim Chief Financial Officer

3. Approval of Minutes

Councilperson Deana McLaughlin entertained a motion. Sonny Emmert made a motion to adopt the July 22, 2025, meeting minutes as written; seconded by Silas Matchem. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Updates by Department

a. Chairman McLaughlin

- i. Overlay Updates – Last month, the overlays were pending approval from the City Council; they went back to the RPC where it was voted down and will now come back to the City Council with the two amendments still in tact (Language regarding should parking on side and rear possibly being changed to shall; other was regarding setback adjustments).
- ii. Speaking Engagement Updates – Will be speaking at the Clarksville Rotary in October regarding the RCI Task Force.
- iii. Legislation Updates
 1. Parking – Looking into the possibility of parking tickets being adjudicated by a city court judge if someone appeals their parking ticket.
 2. State Legislation Possibilities – First few meetings have taken place of the legislative delegation; there are two items coming forward on the agenda pertaining to RC.: There is language from Michelle Austin regarding land banks/trusts and enhanced code violation fines (building and zoning); multiple violations could equate to an enhanced fine enforced by a city court judge.

b. Building and Codes - Justin Crosby

- i. Update on Cases Resolved (Stats) – (*Combined below*)
- ii. Update on Pending Cases (Stats) – We are working to build our dashboard to assist with answering questions in a live environment. The Code Enforcement Division opened 455 cases and 600 inspections across five Code Enforcement Officers.
- iii. Staffing Update - We moved over a Building Inspector to the Code Enforcement Division in order to assist with the more involved structural issues we've been faced with; specifically dilapidated structures, etc. One of our Building Inspectors has taken a position outside the city; the department is unable to lose another building inspector at this time. However, we are looking to hire a code enforcement officer in his place to assist in the interim. Additionally, we are working with building inspectors to cross-train with code enforcement during the winter months.

Deanna McLaughlin – Is Thornton working on the 100 list yet?

Justin Crosby – The original list did not have any calls of service; 80 properties are remaining from the original list that we are currently working through.

Deputy Chief Thornton – Bob Kendrick reached out to me, and we are independently reaching out to property owners.

Sonny Emmert – There is no way to pull the information out of the database and just drop it on the map; we are working to overlay some of the areas with higher crime stats.

c. Chief of Staff - N/A

- i. SeeClickFix: i. See Click Fix –

McLaughlin – Have you seen an uptick in SeeClickFix complaints for RCI?

Bob Kendrick – Yes, we are working to have the map finished and believe you will be pleased.

d. City Forester - Katherine Killebrew

- i. Update on Tree Trimming Assistance – Volunteers have opted out at the current moment due to other paying jobs.

McLaughlin – I have received pictures of bird waste on Franklin Street sidewalks from birds roosting in the trees and within dilapidated buildings. (103 & 105 Franklin St.) I have additionally received requests for storm grates around the trees to assist with mulch washing away and plants not living very long.

Mikey Palmore – We took the grates out 7+ years ago due to overgrowth of tree roots. We can think about putting them back; however, I don't believe we have them anymore. I will get with David Smith to see what can be done.

McLaughlin – The mulch is drifting; perhaps leaving room for tree root growth would help.

Katherine Killebrew – We could possibly use mulch adhesive to assist.

e. Communications - Jimmy Settle

- i. Press Release – A Google Doc was created and shared with the group to capture ideas from respective departments in order to assist in telling a collective story. We have nearly completed a one-page story on the Building & Codes Department dealing with code cases, permitting, etc. and are currently in the editing stage.
- ii. Update/Discussion on Monthly RCI Topics for Community Education – (Mock-up shown of temporary sign) This temporary sign follows the same format as our Transportation 2020 signs.

McLaughlin – Justin Crosby, have you been able to speak to property owners to ask if they would allow temporary signs?

Crosby – No, not yet. I will reach out to the owners in the Fort Campbell Blvd. and New Providence areas that have been part of the RCI efforts.

Emmert – If the sign dimensions are approved, we can order them as we need them.

f. Finance/Grants - Viola Sykes

- i. Update on Submitted Grant Applications – While there are no RCI-specific grants to report on, a status update on the Safe Streets for All award for New Providence/Fort Campbell Boulevard is available. We have completed the contract edits over the last 8 months and are ready to enter into a contract on that. Hopefully, next month we can report on an executed contract or something super close. We did apply for another round of Safe Streets for All funding this year, with an emphasis on public transportation expansion as well as police speed management (aka enforcement). We hope to hear back from that around Christmas time. We have several outstanding TDOT grant application submissions, with widespread sidewalk/pedestrian safety impact from Riverside Drive to Tylertown Road. Hopefully we will hear back soon.
- ii. Funding Options for the New Providence Area – We met with Building Codes last week to discuss how to code invoices for RCI as well as tracking reimbursements.

g. Clarksville Fire Rescue - Captain Reed

We appreciate the efforts being made by those present in the room and the amount of work that goes into what appears to be a simple question. If, during the answering of these questions, we can be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on CFR for our help.

McLaughlin – Is there an update on the wheel shop?

Chief Reed – No updates at this time.

McLaughlin – Is it still under investigation?

Crosby – It has already started the demolition process.

Kendrick – They began the demolition process on their own; we don't have any contractors, but we do have volunteers. Work has started on the back side of the building, so it may not be visible from the road.

Crosby – The process is slow going, but notification was given to them by Building & Codes to start the demolition, or we would tear it down.

Reed – We have an amazing relationship with the staff at Building & Codes. Our inspectors aren't typically on site for an unoccupied building; however, we are in

constant conversation with them to ensure that if we ever run into anything, we can work together.

h. Mayor Pitts

- i. Panhandling – McLaughlin – There has been an uptick in panhandling and the debris left in the right-of-way because of it.

Thornton – We are unaware of any updates as far as the Chief and Mayor. I understand they met last week regarding executive orders out of the White House pertaining to homelessness. There have been signs installed in the right-of-ways, allowing us to act when we locate someone in that given area. We talk to the property owners for enforcement permissions, and we work with our state partners to assist with state routes.

McLaughlin – The TDOT right-of-way is covered in trash. I called 911 when a panhandler was seen with a child in the heat with no shelter.

Thornton – We are busiest in the evening, which leads to prioritization of resources.

i. Neighborhood and Community Services - Michelle Austin

McLaughlin – There has been an uptick in the homeless populations camping and staying on benches downtown; this is not a place for people to remain and distract from pedestrian safety and local small businesses. Is there the potential to remove benches for a while?

Emmert – Some benches are county property.

McLaughlin – If the City is willing to do it, I don't mind speaking with the County about it.

Thornton – We are reviewing the criminal trespass program right now, and who can give us permission to serve criminal trespass notices and how long they are in effect. I see a lot of people using benches downtown, and it seems like punishing all citizens because someone is using it that is unhoused. The elderly need these when visiting downtown.

McLaughlin – If a homeless person and all their belongings are taking up the entire bench, there isn't anywhere for the elderly to sit. Michelle has said she has resources and has provided her cell phone number. She says to call 24 hours if needed.

Crosby – I attempted to assist someone downtown a few weeks ago, and it did not go well.

Thornton – There is a website to afford people the ability to assist monetarily without giving homeless cash directly.

Kendrick – Trespassing is applicable for businesses downtown. Who enforces trespassing for a homeless person on a bench? Code Enforcement cannot enforce this.

McLaughlin – TCA code about overnight camping is enforceable but that's during certain hours and that would fall to law enforcement.

Kendrick – Homeless are using electrical plugs available outside to charge cell phones. Is it possible to turn off exterior plugs in the evening?

McLaughlin – I had experience with the Downtown Commons years ago and am aware there is a panel available to turn off their outside outlets.

Killebrew – We could look into changing out the benches and install the ones with slats in between benches so they cannot stretch out.

i. Update on Potential Redevelopment Projects – N/A

ii. Report on Homeless Coalition Efforts –

Michelle Austin – We have one nonprofit who is going to be opening a shelter but they have to raise the money to do it. We are launching a capital campaign to assist in raising the funding. There are multiple locations in mind but they are still talking to property owners at this point. This is happening; telling people to move is not helpful as they have no where to go. Two other nonprofits are in the works. We are still beating on the door of the Salvation Army to see the process of activating their shelter with 62 beds. They have stated they have an issue with funds, however, they have four staff members on the store side and they're running their utilities. I've had at least eight meetings with them, one-on-one meetings and tried to get other nonprofits in there to work with them and they said no.

Mayor Pitts – Short of 2 million dollars from the City, their doors won't open.

Austin – They say this is their passion.

j. Regional Planning Commission - Silas Matchem

- i. Update on New Providence efforts – The Zoning & Codes open house is tomorrow from 6-8pm to review the rewrite of the zoning ordinance with the public. We are still actively working and have completed our community development corporation and it is officially a 501C3. Additionally, we are working to streamline activities to focus on that area and are looking at education, health, housing, financial stability and community safety. We will have more information to come.

k. Police Department - Deputy Chief Thornton

- i. Stats on vacant & dilapidated structures – I contact Bob Kendrick last week and we can tell that Building & Codes efforts have paid off tremendously in the New Providence area. This committee's focus is the New Providence area and we've seen the crime rate go down. I've noticed holes in the garage door of the blue triangular building in front of Manna Cafe where a car wash was previously. Kendrick – I will look into it.

l. Street - Sonny Emmert

- i. Maintenance of Non-TDOT Pedestrian Islands – What exactly are you meaning by the non-TDOT islands?

McLaughlin – Non-TDOT areas are near Cunningham Lane and Ft. Campbell Blvd. near New Providence Middle School.

Emmert – There are only a few on Ft Campbell Blvd. and we are spraying for weeds.

McLaughlin – The signage instructing pedestrians to push the walkway button is faded.

Emmert – Okay, will work on it.

McLaughlin – When does the flashing school sign go on?

Emmert – I would have to reach out to get that answer. When you push the button it should work.

Thornton – To me it has made a tremendous difference having been up there the past few years; it brings extra attention to the motorists.

McLaughlin – Driving over the indicators on the road that are there now is helpful; they are much better than what was previously installed.

Emmert – What we have now is much brighter than what we had previously.

- ii. Grass cutting of City right-of-ways – McLaughlin – David Smith has explained to me the process of the grass cutting in the city right-of-ways.

Emmert – Right-of-ways does fall on the Street Department.

- iii. Update on Functioning GIS Overlay – I have been working with Building & Codes and have the map fully functional; the staff is using it now and doing updates live on the map. It feeds into a database and we have a dashboard to show progress being made. We started with 102 properties and are now up to 128 as of today.

Mayor Pitts – Who has access to it?

Emmert – The Building & Codes staff and Deanna McLaughlin.

Crosby – We are working on getting it to the final iteration at the moment and don't want to put it out for people to review until it's in the final stages. We want people to be able to follow their complaint and see it through to fruition.

m. Tennessee Department of Transportation - Jesse Ramsey

- i. Maintenance of TDOT Pedestrian Islands & Crosswalks – McLaughlin – Wrecked car bumpers end up in the middle of the road. What can be done?
Jesse Ramsey – We are keeping a close eye on contractors assigned to the islands like the ones on 374 and Ft. Campbell Blvd. to ensure proper cleanup.
- ii. Grass cutting of State/Federal right-of-ways - McLaughlin – Brian and I have discussed the grass contractors way of cutting the right-of-ways and they're not doing it the proper way. Brian said there's something in place now where TDOT staff will be inspecting grass cutting and if that does not satisfy, they will work legally to find an alternative route. Who is in charge of painting medians where people drive over them when making turns like on North Second Street?
Ramsey – There are discussions to implement that very soon.
Austin – When you submit a maintenance work order on the TDOT website; where does that work order go?
Ramsey – I am the one who has to check on them; we go to each one of them and put them on a list. We are short-handed at the moment, however, if it's really bad, we deal with it as immediately as possible. We received a street sweeper this week and are looking at performance once a month.

n. APSU PELP - Kyleigh Koyama

- i. Update on potential PELP volunteers for cleanup days – Kickoff is tomorrow; we will be meeting with them tomorrow to get an idea. They are required to have 20 hours of service to submit by the end of this semester.
- ii. PELP Forum Date for RCI – No date set yet.

o. Mayor's Youth Council - Caleb Lane

- i. Update on potential PELP volunteers for cleanup days – The Mayor's Youth Council meets on Sept. 8th. I've seen progress in the group we have and they are eager to start work. We can assist with PELP; we have 54 sets of hands. We are working on another push at the Women's Expo to obtain volunteers.
Austin – Invite me to your next meeting; I will come and talk to them.
Caleb Lane – September 8th is the next meeting.

5. Committee Member Comments - N/A

6. Next Meeting - Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 4:00 PM.

7. Public Comment -

Jeff Robinson - CPD mentioned the double-edged sword of taking out benches and the inability to assist the elderly. I would like to see more efforts to see other things before taking that radical route, as it wouldn't solve the problem. Progress has been made on the Sheriff's side with them visiting homeless people in the morning and telling them to move on; we are seeing a decrease in them returning; reducing the acuteness of the problem at the moment a little bit.

Jody Isaacs – I appreciate this group; the information was enlightening. I don't see the need for the amount of mulch being used downtown. When you live and work downtown, some of the screeching goes on is something that needs to be addressed. Is there a way that we could call a different number other than 911 if a situation is getting out of hand? Who is the point of contact as far as our vacant buildings downtown? They get a slap on the hand and a small fine for buildings molding, rotting, and falling apart. Perhaps if you don't have someone in the building within 6 months, then you start paying taxes accordingly. We can't allow buildings to be bought and then left to rot.

McLaughlin – There are examples of what's going on downtown all over Clarksville and that is the mission of this RCI Task Force. We've worked with the city attorney's office to find out who owns 103 & 105 Franklin Street to see if we can't get something going.

8. Adjournment

Silas Matchem made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Mayor Pitts. The meeting was adjourned without objection at 5:09 PM.