



City of Clarksville
Restoring Clarksville Initiative 2025 Task Force

July 22, 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
James Halford - Chief of Staff
Justin Crosby - Director, Building & Codes Department
Jason Gregory - Building & Codes Department
Jimmy Settle - Communications Director
Silas Matchem - Clarksville Montgomery County Regional Planning Commission
Scott Thornton - Deputy Chief, Clarksville Police Department
Mike Reed - Assistant Chief, Clarksville Fire Rescue
Matthew Armstrong, Legal Department
Michelle Austin - Director, Clarksville Neighborhood & Community Services
Michael Palmore - Director, Building Maintenance & Parking
Sonny Emmert - Clarksville Street Department
Kathrine Killebrew, City Forester
Christen Wilcox, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Kyleigh Koyama - APSU Emerging Leaders
Caleb Lane - President, Mayor's Youth Council
Valerie Ogle - Building & Codes Department

ABSENT:

Lauren Winters, City Grants Director
TDOT representative

3. Approval of Minutes

Councilperson Deana McLaughlin entertained a motion. Justin Crosby made a motion to adopt the May 27, 2025, meeting minutes as written (June meeting was canceled); seconded by Michelle Austin. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Updates by Department

a. Chairman McLaughlin

Justin Crosby and I presented at the Downtown Kiwanis meeting today. A handout was provided for SeeClickFix, which showed before and after images of locations. We possibly have volunteers for cleanup in legacy neighborhoods.

- i. Overlay Updates: Barely passed the first reading on Ft. Campbell Blvd. and Tiny Town Rd. Overlays. The 2nd reading will take place two weeks from now. I am hopeful for community support.
- ii. Legislation Updates: Everything but the parking rewrite is done and passed. Looking for state support on "Three strikes you're out" for repeat property violations with incremented fining.

Justin Crosby - It would be a punitive fine to help recoup cleanup costs to the City.

Mayor Pitts - Would we have to push these to General Sessions?

Justin Crosby - Probably so, if we are able to iron out our process on the front end it would not be any additional work for our department.

Michelle Austin - Is there a possibility of an option being provided to elderly to be referred?

Justin Crosby - We currently work with people who are low income or express a need verbally; we forward them to any available resources we have and to CNCS or a local church for assistance.

Deanna McLaughlin - This would be for habitual offenders.

Bob Kendrick - Our habitual offenders tend to be absentee owners who live out-of-state and/or military who are deployed.

Deanna McLaughlin - I met with the Historic Preservation ladies who have expressed a desire to assist us in our efforts as well.

b. Building and Codes - Justin Crosby

- i. Staffing Update: We were able to obtain additional staffing who will be coming at the first of the year. We are currently restructuring internally between our Construction Division and Code Enforcement Division. We have Building Inspectors who are reaching multiple certifications, essentially freeing up inspectors with only one certification to assist Code Enforcement; they are able to lend expertise to mediate specific situations. Dual training in the Construction Division will allow for inspectors to merge back and forth within the divisions.
- ii. SeeClickFix – Around April/May we added a tab to SeeClickFix to accommodate complaints specific to the RCI Task Force.

c. Chief of Staff - Chief Halford

- i. SeeClickFix: We were able to narrow down the scope of complaints due to the addition of the new tabs and will continue to refine it with a hope to drive down complaints overall. Complaints are trending up in the RCI Task Force tab and trending down in the code violations portion ([handout provided](#)).

Deanna McLaughlin – Are we able to narrow it down by the address?

Justin Crosby – Yes, we can create a report for that.

Mayor Pitts – I would love to know which of the code violations are true violations.

Justin Crosby – We can pull that data now to see which ones are founded and unfounded.

Michelle Austin – Noise violations on neighbors aren't always a code violation.

Deanna McLaughlin – No, but it is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Chief Halford – That specific instance has resulted in having to obtain a decibel reading and it was noted the sound happens in a three second timeframe due to the HVAC unit.

Bob Kendrick – We regularly receive repeat complaints for the same items, some result in the inability to address if the complaint is not in the ordinance.

Deanna McLaughlin – Are we able to send a message if the citizen doesn't feel the complaint is resolved?

Bob Kendrick – Yes, we've addressed the closed-out cases to ensure they have been worked to our fullest ability with proper communication through the messenger function.

Deanna McLaughlin – The long term issue with the Veteran's home has been taken care of.

Bob Kendrick – That is state property.

Deanna McLaughlin – Yes, I got a hold of someone who ensured it would be cut every two weeks.

Justin Crosby – Some people have told us it's cheaper for the city to cut the grass than for them to hire someone else.

Michael Palmore – Are we able to increase incremental charges without going to the state?

Justin Crosby – No, it must go through City Council. We will try to increase it by going to legislation.

Kathrine Killebrew – What about the tree removal costs? Are they substantially higher?

Justin Crosby – When we abate a property it is safer to hire a contractor and the bid is the price of the lien on the property which Finance recoups with taxes. The tree jobs we take on ourselves are typically cutting up a fallen tree, not a standing tree. We charge by the hour for that type of abatement.

Kathrine Killebrew – What is the percentage of tree removals?

Justin Crosby – We don't do them often as we don't want our hands on them with the high risk and liability.

d. City Forester - Michael Palmore

- i. Update on Tree Trimming Assistance: How do you know when the homeowner is low income?

Justin Crosby - We go off what they tell us.

Michael Palmore - How does CNCS confirm it?

Michelle Austin – If they tell us they need help, we help. If we use our CDBG funds then we will ensure that a person is low income and that will be one of our team members who does that check.

Justin Crosby – We don't inquire but if the homeowner discloses it then we assume they do.

Michael Palmore – How often do you receive tree specific issues?

Justin Crosby – Not often at all.

Deanna McLaughlin – The legacy neighborhood cleanups would increase that number.

Michael Palmore – If your abatement crew is going on properties to cut up trees, do we not have the same jurisdiction to cite for tree trimming?

Justin Crosby – No, we would not have authority to cite for tree trimming.

Michelle Austin – We have the ability to prevent liability on the city by utilizing our volunteers.

Michael Palmore – How can we help in the Forestry if the percentage is so low? How do you want our input?

Justin Crosby – As we need you; it would be integral no matter how infrequent it occurs and we would not want to use a third party as you are on the same level with your heart in the right place.

Michael Palmore – If you need a tree taken down, we do tend to have the funds somewhere.

Justin Crosby – Will keep you in the loop to ensure communication for future efforts.

Bob Kendrick – We have been successful with sending emails to Kathrine for tree reviews and she responds if the tree is dead and needs to be removed.

Michael Palmore – We've discussed simplifying our process to speed it up.

Mayor Pitts – Do we attach a lien to the property if we take it down through Maintenance?

Michael Palmore – It's a partnership. Do you do the lien through Energov?

Justin Crosby – No, we process liens through the Register of Deeds and send them to Finance to collect.

Deanna McLaughlin – If we did a better job to figure out what department is responsible for grass cutting it would be helpful. If one city department is already in an area, wouldn't it be more bang for their buck to handle all grass cutting within a certain area?

Justin Crosby – If the city owns a property that needs cutting, we are now cutting it following a discussion with Parks and Rec, since we are in that part of town anyways. This Fall we are looking to review all city owned property mowing outside of parks.

- ii. Revisit - Abatement of dead trees when codes initiate building removal.

e. Communications - Jimmy Settle

- i. Website Update: We worked with the IT Dept to create website updates specifically for RCI for SeeClickFix. The website is becoming a central clearinghouse of updates and over time we will be linking to the website through social media and other platforms to give updates and overviews of the process.
- ii. Press Releases: We are looking towards an extensive news release now that we are seven months in.

Deanna McLaughlin – Are we at a point to create a theme for a media push? Such as the feather flags. I spoke with Mark Riggins, he noted the ability to include notices on the invoices.

Justin Crosby – We could do that. I will work with Bob and his team to work on a list of feather flags, empty sign cases, parking on sidewalks, etc. that we can give to Jimmy for him to disperse monthly; highlighting a violation that is illegal.

Deanna McLaughlin – We need to keep our mission relevant and this could go on the landing page for RCI as it is educational and some people just don't know. We could start a Google Doc that we could all compile together.

Bob Kendrick – Feather flags are illegal now?

Deanna McLaughlin – They are already illegal; it is in the Zoning Code.

Justin Crosby – The prior city attorney would not allow us to cite people for feather flags as they were not “not legal.”

Sonny Emmert – Signage has been ordered with updated language. 24x24 sign.

Deanna McLaughlin – Signs could be placed on the properties cleaned if we obtain the property owner's permission beforehand.

f. Finance/Grants - Lauren Winters

- i. Deanna McLaughlin – On behalf of Lauren Winters: we are still waiting on a list of brownfield properties. They asked her if there are any properties we would like to see researched; she is collaborating on that list now. Brownfields are sites with potential pollutants on their properties.

g. Clarksville Fire Rescue - Captain Reed

- i. Update on Wheel Shop Arson Investigation: The owners have secured an attorney who has secured a private fire investigation company who were on site the middle of last week. The city has concluded its investigation; we don't have a flex on what the owner does or who they secure for their investigation. We have exhausted our investigative efforts and are at the mercy of others for the issue to be resolved.
Justin Crosby – Chief Reed and Jason Gregory are working the open code violation through. We believe if we send notification of our intent to clean up the property ourselves they will send an injunction to stop our cleanup efforts.
Mike Reed - There is language in the NFPA 921 – Spoliate, where a scene is violated beyond what it can be reasonably investigated. We believe it is far beyond the possibility of spoliation and could be a term some company may use against the city if we attempt to intercede.

h. Mayor Pitts

- i. I've seen great conversation to date with cross talk and collaboration over the last seven months. We created a special revenue fund and as we recover some of the liens it will go into that fund to hire additional staff, cleanups, etc.

i. Neighborhood and Community Services - Michelle Austin

- i. Land Bank: We met internally to start putting together what it would look like to create a land bank. Eric Bitner said because of our population, we are unable to set up a land bank. The Legislative Agenda Committee will come back to them. Silas Matchem – Procedural wise, there's a document that goes in depth on this.
Deanna McLaughlin – Anything to report on the New Providence area for RPC?
Silas Matchem – We are looking at community development corporations; Queen City CDC is now in the stages of looking for targeted programmatic efforts that the CDC can get into with primary focus on the New Providence area. Visioning sessions/town halls are in the works for the New Providence area

with our community members in order to become apprised of desired focus with the intention of meeting every other week.

Deanna McLaughlin – Keep us updated on that and when it's time for public announcements. July 29th the Housing Needs Assessment is being hosted at the Wilma Rudolph Event Center; it will be explained in detail and have an opportunity for a Q&A.

Michelle Austin – Justin, did you RSVP?

Justin Crosby – No.

Michelle Austin – I need you to be there.

- ii. Property Repair Program: We are letting people know this program is available for HVAC. We have had 98 applications in the last few weeks and are moving forward with a lot of those. We're looking into teaming up with the Mayor's Youth Council for cleanup efforts and are looking into placing dumpsters in areas for use and the possibility of hauling off larger items.

Michael Palmore – If you bring in my people you will have trucks available.

Michelle Austin – We're looking into setting something up for the Fall and possibly making it a series of events.

j. Regional Planning Commission - Silas Matchem

k. Police Department - Deputy Chief Thornton

- i. Captain Blackman arranged to ride with Bob Kendrick a few weeks ago to be apprised of what he could do to assist and vice versa. Working on getting everyone on the same sheet of music.

Deanna McLaughlin – My personal experiences with Captain Blackman have been wonderful; he's agreed to speak at the next town hall.

l. Street - Sonny Emmert

- i. The LED grant is finished up and we're currently updating and revamping our Adopt-A-Street program. I've been working with the B&C Dept staff to assist with updating GIS maps with current information as information is available. A dashboard was created to incorporate a map to start to see more numbers.

Deanna McLaughlin – Is there a way to see the crime areas of focus on that as a tool? For Codes and law enforcement to use.

Chief Thornton – Yes, I introduced Cameron Plunket and Sonny Emmert to work on items such as this.

Chief Halford – Are we able to marry up the heat mapping?

Sonny Emmert – Yes.

Chief Thornton – We are working with a company called Centra Square for updating programs as they aren't currently doing what the program should have been doing and the city attorney is involved. Reports don't feed into the heat maps currently.

m. Tennessee Department of Transportation - Jay Wheeler and Brian Keith

- i. Deanna McLaughlin - TDOT is focusing on the Trenton road area with paving in the next few weeks pending I-24 paving completion. They're focusing on identifying and working on weed removal and have drafted regular scheduling of street sweepers in their right-of-ways.

Chief Halford – When will they resurface the bridge over I-24 on Trenton?

Deanna McLaughlin – That is not in the written update.

n. APSU PELP - Kyleigh Koyama

- i. I have started working with the freshman class as a mentor and will meet to discuss how they can get involved and what the logistics of PELP will be.

o. Mayor's Youth Council - Caleb Lane

- i. I've begun working with the executive council to get the ball rolling and am looking forward to collaborating here.

Michelle Austin – When you get with your team, ensure they use sensitivity and find a good way to tell their story and not speak of community members as poor people.

5. Committee Member Comments - N/A

6. Next Meeting - Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 4:00 PM.

7. Public Comment - N/A

8. Adjournment

Chief Halford made a motion to adjourn; the motion was seconded by Sonny Emmert. The meeting was adjourned without objection at 5:16 PM.