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MONDAY, APRIL 26, 2010

What Is Councilman Strickland Doing With That Rat? (and Other Blight Initiatives)

POSTED BY [JACKSON BAKER](#) ON MON, APR 26, 2010 AT 11:11 AM

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An artist's rendering; really, Jim Strickland isn't that fond of rats. (See text.)

Urban blight of one kind or another is suddenly very much on the agenda of local politics. In the last few days, two significant independent initiatives have issued from office-holders on the city council or county commission, and Shelby County government itself is now involved in an overall program entitled "Clean Green Shelby."

"A meeting on the rat problem in Memphis" has been called by Shelby County Commissioner Mike Carpenter and Memphis City Council member Jim Strickland for the Memphis Botanic Gardens this Thursday night, April 29.

And county commissioner Steve Mulroy held a press conference Sunday on the site of the once thriving, now deserted and dilapidated Marina Cove apartment complex on Winchester Ave. in Hickory Hill, calling for its immediate demolition.



Please join
 Commissioner Mike Carpenter and Councilman Jim Strickland
 for a meeting on the rat problem in Memphis

April 29, 2010
 6:30 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
 Memphis Botanic Gardens, 750 Cherry Road

•RATS

: Strickland said that "over the last 12 months or so," he had received numerous complaints from residents of his Midtown/East Memphis district complaining of rat infestation. "One from a lady who found a live rat in her toilet," Strickland said. He added that he had experienced "three rats in the last year and a half" at his own residence, off Bonlar Avenue in the University of Memphis area.

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own residence, on Poplar Avenue in the University of Memphis area.

He said his pest control service-person had given the name of "Rat City" to the upscale Poplar corridor — although he acknowledged that other areas of the city had perhaps even more serious rat problems.

Strickland said he had teamed up with Carpenter to seek a solution to the problem because the commissioner represented essentially the same geographic area and because "the county is actually in charge of rat abatement."

The councilman said this week's meeting was meant to inform the community of activity over the past 9 months of an ad hoc committee formed by himself and Carpenter, who chairs it, and to solicit community reaction.

"Currently, all of us pay 75 cents a month for vector control on our MLGW bill," Strickland said. "But the Health Department is very clear that they are not exterminators." Any more serious action would involve additional costs and would require action by the council and/or commission.



JB

Carey, Mulroy, and Casey at Marina Cove

-MARINA COVE

: Commissioner Mulroy, who has worked on the Marina Cove issue with Councilman Harold Collins, said the property has become "a breeding ground for vermin of six legs, four legs, and two legs" and called for concerted city and county action to come up with demolition costs — estimated as "between a million and a half and two million dollars."

Those costs could ultimately be recovered from the property's absentee owners in California, said Mulroy, who proposed a lawsuit to force the property into receivership.

Such action was needed, Mulroy said, because nothing thus far had resulted from "four different administrative or [previous] legal actions taken against this project," involving something like 75 court appearances in the last six years." The absentee owners are meanwhile using the property for a tax write-off, he said.

Flanked by area residents Jesse Carey and James Casey at Sunday's press conference, Mulroy noted that the project's last residents were moved out of Marina Cove six years ago when the Health Department closed it down.

At present, debris of all kinds litters the grounds and the interiors of the housing units, which have been stripped of appliances, copper wiring and tubing.

"We've got to get this 500-pound elephant out of our neighborhood," said Casey, who argued that it held back potential economic progress in the entire Hickory Hill area. He and Mulroy suggested that a non-profit organization could be formed to plan redevelopment of the grounds.

-CLEAN GREEN SHELBY

: Interim Shelby County Mayor Joe Ford, who convened a meeting week before last of area environmental activists, held a press conference at Shelby Farms last week on "Earth Day" to announce his "Clean Green Shelby" initiative.

The project will focus on five areas:

the "Wolf River Brownfields Assessment Program," which would avail itself of \$400,000 in federal funds to develop several blighted areas along the Wolf River basin in accordance with green concepts;

recycling, involving a pilot program employing county corrections inmates; air quality, focusing on an immediate inventory of greenhouse gases;

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environmental infrastructure, involving concerted between the county's municipal mayors to reduce pollution from waste water treatment plans;

ground water, undertaking a long-range undertaking, in concert with federal agencies and the University of Memphis to address "long-term protection and sustainability of the Memphis Sands Aquifer."

"On this 40th anniversary of Earth Day, we should all vow to take this opportunity to build on the progress of the past 40 years," Ford said.

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Maybe they could arm residents with Crossman CO2 pellet pistols. A few years ago I had something of a rat problem and spent many a delightful afternoon perched atop the swingset with an airgun honing my sniper skills.

Until the SWAT team showed up. I should have worn hunter orange.

Posted by [Jeff](#) on April 26, 2010 at 12:59 PM | [Report this comment](#)



Use dry dog food and .22 CB rounds by CCI. The rats love the dog food and the firing pin striking the casing is louder than the report with the CB rounds. I sat bagged rats all day long from the comfort of my back porch.

Posted by [mad_merc](#) on April 26, 2010 at 3:45 PM | [Report this comment](#)

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