

Bloomfield Hills man appointed as Lincoln Park emergency manager



Brad Coulter will take a leave of absence from his job at a turnaround consulting firm in Bloomfield Hills to serve as the emergency manager of Lincoln Park.

By Anne Runkle, The News-Herald

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A Bloomfield Hills man will be taking a leave of absence from being an independent contractor with O'Keefe & Associates, a turnaround consulting firm, to serve as the Lincoln Park emergency manager.

At a City Council meeting July 21, Lincoln Park emergency manager Brad Coulter heard from residents on concerns ranging from graffiti on buildings to abandoned vehicles in backyards.

Many expressed anger and frustration at the meeting, the first since Gov. Rick Snyder appointed Coulter to the post two weeks ago. Those emotions could be a good thing,

Coulter said.

“There are people who are very passionate about Lincoln Park and that’s what we need to tap into,” he said.

He hopes to channel those strong feelings into volunteer efforts to clean up neighborhoods and parks, attracting new residents and businesses and reversing declining property values. He said anger is positive if it prompts people to act, but not if it encourages people to live in the past. It’s time to move forward, he said.

“I don’t care about what happened five years ago or 10 years ago, or who you’ve been mad at since high school,” he said.

Property values in Lincoln Park and surrounding cities dropped dramatically for several years in a row. In other nearby cities, property values are starting to make small gains. In Lincoln Park, however, property values continue to fall. Declining property values result in decreased tax revenue. City officials have said it’s one of the main reasons that Lincoln Park ended up with a \$1 million deficit, prompting the governor to appoint an emergency manager.

“If we don’t stabilize our property values, no matter what I do, we’re going to be back here again,” Coulter said.

He expressed a willingness to work with the council and asked for members’ help in questioning business owners about what would attract them to the city. He said the city might have made too many cuts to try to compensate for lower tax revenue. Those cuts might have made the city unattractive to some. As an example, he cited the ongoing battle against graffiti. The city doesn’t have the resources to commit staff members to remove it.

A small group of volunteers in the Citizens Patrol Watch remove graffiti as they are able. Councilman Larry Kelsey is the president of the group. Coulter asked what he could do to help Kelsey recruit more volunteers. He supported Councilman Mark Kandes’ plan to organize volunteer cleanup days at city parks. He said Kelsey and Councilwoman Deborah Henderson are serving on an advisory committee that is looking at residents’ complaints about the Department of Public Services.

Four residents filed applications to serve on the committee; one more is sought. Information on how to apply will be posted soon on the city’s website, www.citylp.com Mayor Tom Karnes encouraged residents to get involved in some volunteer effort to help the city.

“Give us your best. We’ll give you our best, pay or no pay. We’re talking about volunteerism, right?” he said, a reference to the automatic suspension of his and the council members’ salaries, required under state law when an emergency manager is appointed.

The emergency manager can reinstate the salaries of the mayor and council members

or can choose to pay them at a reduced rate.

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