

# Officials in Jonesboro track crime in rental property areas

5/6/11

BY KARIN HILL  
SUN STAFF WRITER

**JONESBORO** — City officials are keeping a closer eye on criminal activity and property upkeep at rental units after many residents cited concerns at recent community conversation meetings.

Part of this effort will be more outreach to landlords to inform them of regulations and encourage them to monitor their properties. The Police Department has had previous discussions with landlord associations on such issues.

"We've had one group come in already, and they've agreed to self-abate," Police Chief Mike

**MAP** details crime areas, B4

Yates said.

Some rental property owners from the Cedar Heights area, where police frequently deal with problems, met with the department recently and agreed to work on some of those issues to prevent the need for the city to go through the full legal abatement process on nuisance properties, Yates said.

At the Ward 1 meeting City Attorney Phillip Crego said the city's use of criminal abatements, which hold landlords financially responsible for crimes associated with their properties, is a successful tool that results in better control by land-

lords on what takes place on their properties and a reduction in crime.

The Police Department maintains a list of all apartment complexes and owners and is working on its "top 10," Yates said.

"And we're repeating that process with other landlords; it just takes a while," he said.

One tool the Police Department is using to pinpoint priority areas is a series of maps plotting rental properties and various types of crime throughout the city. In most cases clusters of rental houses or apartment complexes coincide with higher crime rates.

Some undesirable activity is simply due to ab-

sentee landlords who are not aware of everything that occurs on their property, Mayor Harold Perrin said. The city wants to inform them of problems and what expectations officials have.

## Drainage, traffic, etc.

Other issues brought up at the community meetings — held late March through April in each of the city's six wards — included the usual complaints about drainage, traffic, lack of sidewalks and code enforcement issues.

As was the case last year, Perrin said he is keeping track of every concern voiced and will work with

department heads to resolve as many problems as possible.

Although attendance was down from 2010, there were 67 total issues discussed compared to about 38 last year. Last year code enforcement issues generated the most questions and ultimately resulted in quite a bit of work by the city, including 31 homes demolished.

Each item was delegated to a city department: 10 in Code Enforcement, 15 in Police, 19 in Engineering, 16 in Streets, two in Parks and Recreation, three in Sanitation and two in E-911.

Perrin said he will review the list every month to ensure progress is be-

*'We've had one group come in already, and they've agreed to self-abate.'*

**Mike Yates**  
Jonesboro police chief

ing made on all tasks.

"I'm going to keep that whole list until it's completed," Perrin said. "So then I can report back to the people, this was the date it was done, etc."

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## TODAY:

Sunny. Highs in the lower 70s. West winds 5-10 mph.  
Tonight: Mostly clear.  
Lows in the lower 50s.



## ON SATURDAY:

*Traffic changes are possible at intersection of Highland Drive, Harrisburg Road.*

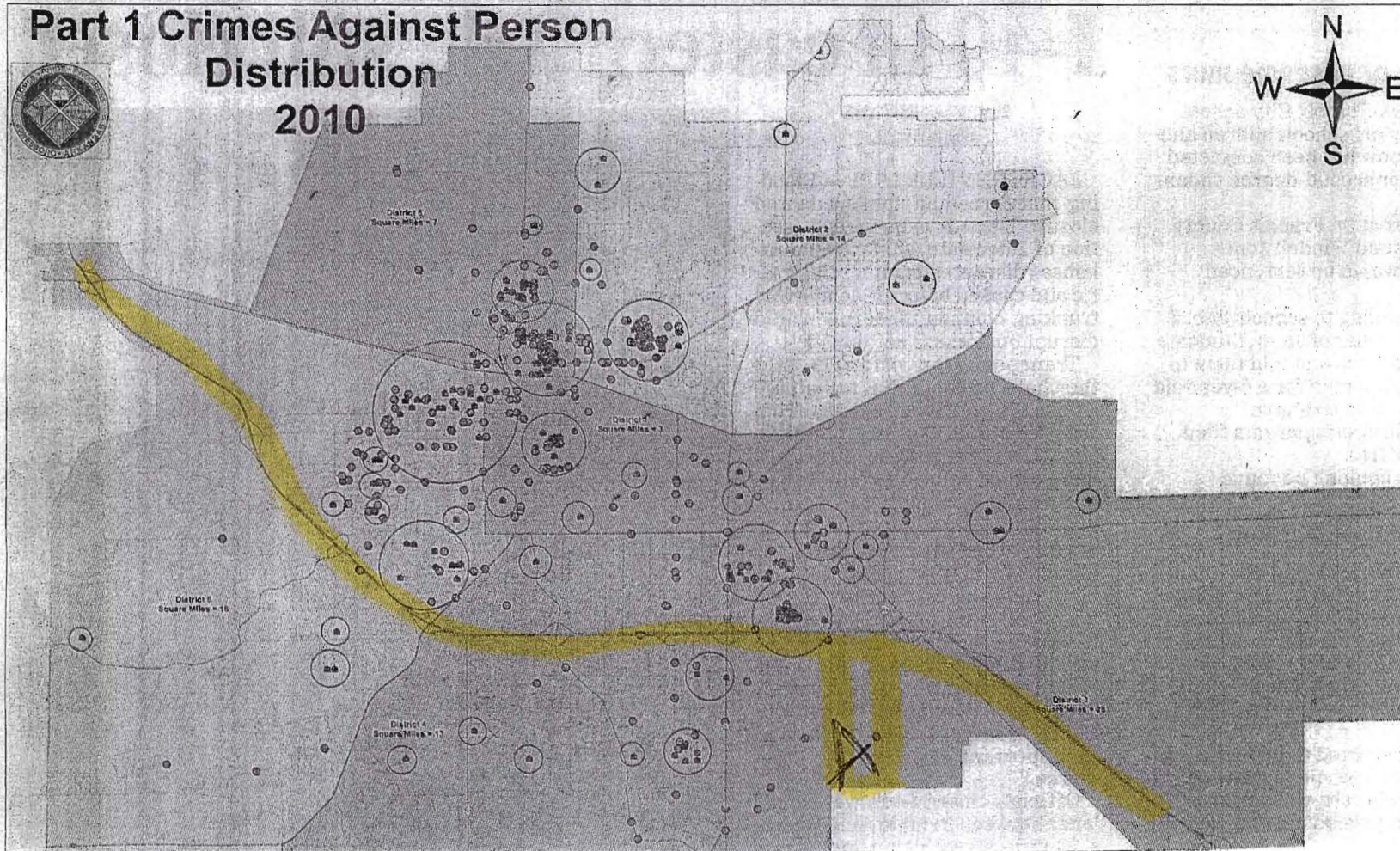
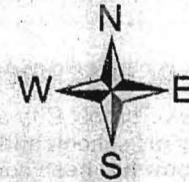
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COMMUNITY . . . . .	D2	SPORTS . . . . .	C1



# Part 1 Crimes Against Person Distribution 2010



## Crime stats tracked

This map created by the Jonesboro Police Department shows locations of such crimes as aggravated assault, murder, rape and kidnapping (blue dots) in relation to rental properties (red dots) throughout the city. The larger circles indicate clusters of rental properties.



# Rezoning rejected by council

## Upholds decision by planners

BY KARIN HILL  
SUN STAFF WRITER

**JONESBORO** — A Colony Drive property owner lost his appeal of a zoning decision Tuesday as the Jonesboro City Council voted 8-3 against his request.

Council members did not specify why they voted one way or the other, but they did so after hearing arguments from the owner's attorney and a neighbor who presented a petition signed by 171 people opposed to the rezoning.

Duyen V. Tran had sought to rezone 8.6 acres on the north side of Colo-

ny Drive east of Antosh Circle, between Antosh and Richardson Road, from R-1 to RM-4 limited use overlay for a density of four units per acre.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Commission denied the proposal by a majority vote May 10 after commissioners cited several concerns including flooding in the area and the property's proximity to railroad tracks.

Tran's attorney, Jim Lyons, said in his appeal letter that the MAPC's findings and decision were "arbitrary, capricious and inappropriate" for several reasons, among



Graycen Colbert | The Sun

Jonesboro resident Sherri Beatty addresses the City Council regarding flood insurance Tuesday inside the Huntington Building.

them that commissioners weighed concerns about the area in general greater than the impacts of the specific site.

He also told the council that the current zoning would allow for a greater number of single-family homes than the number of

units permitted under the proposed plan.

"It's intended to be town-house units, nice units," he said, adding it was to be a gated community. "If we leave the single family and Mr. Tran develops it as is, it would be a larger number than would be on

there if it's developed as RM-4 LUO."

A maximum of 34 units would have been allowed with the new zoning, while 68 are allowed currently, he said.

Lyons also noted the project would have to mitigate any flooding so

as not to harm the neighborhood.

Doug Ward, a resident of Colony Drive, said he understood that the current zoning allows for a greater number of units but that he would prefer

PLEASE SEE COUNCIL, A2



# COUNCIL: Permits required for festivals, foot races, other activ

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houses over rental units.

"Houses are great," he said. "... People take care of property when they own it."

He also criticized the proposed development's impact on traffic, especially its proximity to railroad tracks, and said it would not take much for cars to back up onto the tracks and create a dangerous situation.

"There have been deaths on this railroad track on Colony Drive since I've lived there," he said.

Alderman Chris Moore said he normally would not waive additional readings of a rezoning ordinance but suggested the council resolve the matter Tuesday since so many people interested in the matter were present at the meeting.

Council members Charles Frierson, Gene Vance and Ann Williams voted for the rezoning, while Moore, Charles Coleman, Chris Gibson, John Street, Mitch Johnson, Darrel Dover, Rennel Woods and Mikel Fears dissented. Tim McCall was absent.

In other business the council adopted an ordinance that will require permits and fees for festivals, marathons and other activities that take place on public property. It was adopted with an emergency clause, which means it goes into effect immediately.

Police Chief Mike Yates said the measure is necessary partly because too many events requir-

ing city police, sanitation or other resources are being scheduled at the same time, placing extra personnel strain and costs on those departments.

The application process will allow police officials to gauge the safety of the event's logistics and plan for extra personnel on event dates. Police could request modifications to a route for a parade or run if it were found to be a safety hazard.

## Fees of \$100 and \$50

Permit fees, \$100, and barricade fees, \$50, were approved in a separate resolution.

Yates said he wanted to clarify that the measure is not intended to control all kinds of assemblies.

"It's really very limited in scope," he said. "It only applies to gatherings of 25 people or more in areas where they're conducting their activities in the public right-of-way, the sidewalks or street, in a manner that interferes with traffic."

He said the situation where city officials had absolutely no influence on such events had led to three options. One was to create some kind of organization to these activities, which this ordinance aims to do; two, to put a lot more money in employee overtime budgets; or three, to not do anything and let everyone do what they want without any city involvement — an option Yates did not recommend.

Mayor Harold Perrin said the

fees won't even cover the cost of staffing these events. Also, groups may request waiver city-sponsored events are automatically exempt from the fee.

Also Tuesday the council approved:

- several resolutions pertaining to an application for a disaster relief grant;
  - a contract with Morris-LLC for 2011 sidewalk improvements;
  - a contract with Belk Construction Inc. for design-build services for Pavilion No. 1 at Craighead Park;
  - contracts with Andy's Frustard and Chick-fil-A for sponsorships at Joe Mack Campbell Park;
  - appointments to the Transportation Management Board;
  - a resolution to hire Michael Roughs for accountant services;
  - a contract with Frank A. Ro for the construction of a vehicle storage facility;
  - a contract with Civil Engineering Associates LLC to provide engineering services for the city; and
  - a resolution to endorse the participation of Rural Sourcing in participation in the Tax Back program.
- The council also heard a presentation from Wendy Stotts of the city's Auditorium Commission regarding a community survey at The Forum.

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1. #4 is the Colony Dr crossing. This crossing is the route used by hundreds of people each day to access Stadium Blvd, and return home.
2. #3 Rook Rd crossing is a non-signalized crossing, on a curve in the railroad tracks that is very dangerous. It is a major problem to get onto Stadium Blvd at the Kum /Go. It is also a narrow road and not used as an access road by residents in our area.
3. #1 and #2 crossings are along the by-pass, far north and east of where most residents in this area live. They also enter Stadium Blvd. at choke points by Baptist Hospital and at the south side of the by-pass.
4. #5 is the crossing at Apt, which is south, and very few people drive south to go north, to Jonesboro.
5. Crossings #3 # 4 #5 have all had fatal train/car accidents in the recent past.
6. Look at the vast areas of vacant land east of Colony Dr. Colony Dr. cannot serve all this area if building continues. It is extremely busy now.





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