

WORK SESSION OF THE GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL held Monday, July 20, 2009, for the purpose of receiving a Police Briefing.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:18 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Councilmembers Konrad E. Herling, Leta M. Mach, Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; and Cindy Murray, City Clerk.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Chief James Craze, Lt. Carl Schinner, MPO Kelly Lawson, Cpl. Seung Lee, Greenbelt Police Department; and Jordan Attebury, Gazette.

Overview of Crime Statistics

Chief Craze presented an overview of the crime statistics from January through May 2009. He noted a decrease in the number of auto thefts but said that other crimes had remained steady compared to the same period in the previous five years. Chief Craze attributed the decrease in auto thefts to the regional law enforcement efforts towards reducing auto thefts throughout the entire Washington area.

Mayor Davis requested that future reporting of crime per sector include a separation of crimes in Greenbelt East into commercial and residential areas.

Mayor Davis and Mr. Putens asked what an average citizen can do to reduce crime. Chief Craze said a cooperative effort is needed between the public and the police. He said residents should call the police whenever they observe people and/or cars in their neighborhoods that they don't recognize.

There was discussion regarding solicitors. Chief Craze encouraged residents to report solicitors to the police. Mayor Davis suggested information be put in the News Review regarding solicitors.

Mr. Putens asked what can be done to get more bike and foot patrols in place. Chief Craze said additional officers would need to be hired.

Briefing on Gang Activity

Cpl. Lee provided a presentation on gang activity in the City. He emphasized the need to acknowledge gang activity in the community and act on it as soon as possible before gangs gain a strong foothold in the community. Cpl. Lee encouraged citizens to report graffiti and other suspicious activity to the police.

Mayor Davis requested Cpl. Lee meet with local community groups to share information on gangs. Cpl. Lee said he will be meeting with local parent teacher associations, as well as other

community groups. Chief Craze added that the Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program will continue to be used as a preventative measure.

Press Releases

MPO Lawson said she is working to highlight the positive aspects of the department through press releases which are sent to local television and radio media, newspapers and homeowners associations. Ms. Mach requested that press releases be sent to local foreign language newspapers.

MPO Lawson said nine different National Night Out events are being organized throughout the city. Ms. Mach commented that National Night Out events had not been covered by the media well in past years, and asked that press releases promoting the event be sent out to all media groups.

Staffing Matters

Chief Craze said there are 19 police officers eligible to retire in less than three years and 24 officers eligible to retire in less than five years. He expressed concern regarding the possibility of a large number of experienced officers retiring and asked Council to consider hiring additional officers to prepare for the future. Chief Craze noted that it takes approximately one year from the time a police officer candidate is hired until he is ready for assignment.

Reserve Officer Program

Mr. Putens asked if retired officers could be hired under a reserve officer program. Chief Craze said that retired officers from other departments could be hired, but he was unsure whether officers retired from the City could be rehired. Mr. McLaughlin explained there were potential problems with the Internal Revenue Service and Maryland State retirement regarding retirement from and rehiring by the same jurisdiction, especially if there is no break in service.

Chief Craze said he was not opposed to the reserve officer program, but emphasized that reserve officers must meet the same requirements of the Maryland Police and Corrections Training Commission as full-time police officers. He also mentioned the reserve officers would be represented by the same labor union recognized by the City for full-time officers, and would have to be provided with all benefits.

Mr. Herling asked if any other cities have utilized the reserve officer program. Lt. Schinner said no cities were using the program, but it had been used by some counties. He noted that counties using the program have experienced scheduling issues with the reserve officers not wanting to work evenings or night shifts.

Mr. Roberts said he liked the idea of retaining knowledge and experience but preferred to use resources for the next wave of new full-time officers who will serve the city for many years. He said he was not opposed to using retired officers for civilianized jobs in the department. Mr. McLaughlin said civilianization of some positions currently assigned to officers would be reviewed.

Ms. Mach indicated that she would first like to see part-time employment offered to potential Greenbelt retirees in order to keep their knowledge and experience.

Mayor Davis summarized the discussion by stating there was Council support for examining the issue further. She said the focus should be on building the department in preparation of the large number of retirements expected within the next five years, but there needs to be flexibility including offering City officers part-time employment and utilizing officers retired from other police jurisdictions.

CALEA Reaccreditation

Mayor Davis congratulated the entire department for their recent CALEA reaccreditation review which was described by the reaccreditation panel as an outstanding on-site review.

The meeting ended at 10:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Cindy Murray
City Clerk*