

POLICE COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 29, 2001

The Police Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on March 29, 2001 at 9:43 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman
Jim Davidson
Pat Pomeroy

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

1. Hear a presentation and consider proposed improvements to the Dobson Ranch Police/Fire Substation.

Commander Steve Toland addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and said that he is the Commander of the Dobson Police substation. Commander Toland explained that the proposed improvements are to expand the parking and improve security measures at the Dobson Police, Fire and Library facility. Commander Toland reported that the proposed improvements include the addition of 35 new parking spaces in the rear of the facility and the addition of a seven foot security block wall that would extend around the facility to the back of the fire station. He noted that the proposed new parking area would only be minimally visible from Dobson Road and the proposed improvements would not affect the emergency phone at the front of the station or the drive-up ATM (Arizona Federal Credit Union) at the front of the facility.

Commander Toland noted that voters previously approved a bond proposal regarding the proposed improvements.

Commander Toland referred to illustrations on display in the Council Chambers depicting the proposed improvements and said that currently, there are 73 police vehicles in the Dobson fleet and 74 parking spaces in the rear area of the police station. Commander Toland reported that between the library, fire and police stations, there are 148 full time employees at the Dobson facility plus additional part-time and volunteer library workers.

Commander Toland commented on numerous security issues associated with the parking lot area at the Dobson facility during the last several years, including: two suicides, one near the fire station entryway and one in the sallyport area of the police station; numerous family disputes in the parking lot; a confirmed member of an outlaw motorcycle gang in the parking lot writing down license plates of employees' vehicles; and numerous criminal damage incidents to police and employee vehicles including broken antennas and substances on vehicles.

Commander Toland expressed security concerns regarding the fact that the Dobson police fleet is presently being updated with new lap top computers in the vehicles to replace the fixed mobile digital computers at a cost of approximately \$6,000 per computer. Commander Toland added that the computers might be targeted for theft.

Commander Toland stated that the fiscal impact of the proposed improvements is \$266,620; to be paid from authorized bond funds.

Commander Toland noted those in concurrence regarding the proposed improvements, including: Dobson Library Director Mike Pritchford, who is in favor of the improvements due to the increased security benefits and also because it will result in additional available parking for library visitors; Assistant Fire Chief Paul Wilson, who shares in the security concerns of the facility; Roger Weber, the current Dobson Ranch Homeowner's Association Director, who toured the facility with members of the Dobson Ranch Homeowner's Association Architectural Committee and provided a letter of concurrence; and the management company for the neighboring Acacia Lakes Apartments.

In response to questions from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the location of the proposed parking lot, Commander Toland referred to the illustrations on display and noted that the proposed parking lot would infringe slightly into the adjacent park, although the area to be utilized is a grassy area only with no other improvements present.

In response to a question from Chairman Kavanaugh, Commander Toland said that the next step in proceeding with the improvements would be to retain an architect to prepare conceptual drawings.

Chairman Kavanaugh commented on problems associated with development of the parking garage at the Main Police Station and stressed the importance of following the same procedures required of all development applicants.

In response to concerns voiced by Chairman Kavanaugh, Commander Toland explained that it is staff's intent to first have conceptual drawings prepared by an architect that will adequately depict the proposed improvements, and then seek public input and respond to any public concerns.

It was moved by Committeemember Davidson, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendations regarding proposed improvements to the Dobson Ranch Police/Fire Substation be approved.

Chairman Kavanaugh concurred with the security concerns voiced by Commander Toland regarding the present facility and stated approval of staff's recommendations to retain an architect to prepare conceptual drawings and to apprise the public of the proposed improvements to the facility.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked Commander Toland for the presentation.

2. Discuss and consider charging media outlets a fee for police reports.

Police Sergeant Mike Goulet addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and said that he is the Sergeant in the Police Department's Public Information Office. Sergeant Goulet reported that the Public Information Office receives requests for copies of police reports from the media on a regular basis and except for occasionally charging a fee for unusually lengthy reports, the current practice is to provide the copies free of charge. Sergeant Goulet added that some requests require additional work by staff to compile data that is not readily available.

Sergeant Goulet stated that staff is seeking Council's input with regard to charging the media for copies of reports. He noted that the present policy of the Police Department's Records Department is to charge all requestors, except the first copy of crime reports for crime victims, for copies of reports. Sergeant Goulet said

that staff recommends that the Public Information Office adopt the same fee schedule used by the Records Department with respect to charging for police reports. He added that staff would like Council's direction with respect to charging fees for extra work performed by staff in responding to requests for information or compilation of data that is not readily available.

In response to questions from Committeemember Davidson regarding the proposed fee schedule, Sergeant Goulet reported that the fee schedule proposed by staff (as presently used by the Records Department) is \$5.00 per report for the first 50 pages and 20 cents per page thereafter, that the Public Information Office averages 100 requests per year for copies of reports, and that the report lengths vary from just a few pages up to 1,500 pages.

It was moved by Committeemember Davidson, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation that the Public Information Office charge the media for police reports consistent with the policy and fee schedule utilized by the Records Department, be approved.

In response to a question from Chairman Kavanaugh regarding staff's anticipated response from the media regarding the proposed fee schedule, Sergeant Goulet said that the media has demonstrated a willingness to pay for the reports.

Discussion ensued regarding report requests that require additional efforts from staff; the fact that some reports must be redacted by detectives requiring significant detective hours; some requests require research by the crime analysis unit, such as providing a history of incidents at a certain location.

Committeemember Davidson expressed the opinion that staff is underestimating the true cost of providing the special services previously described and that the proposed fee schedule may not be adequate compensation for work performed.

Police Chief Jan Strauss informed the Committee that the Public Information Office sometimes receives requests for an entire investigation, which can be many volumes requiring extensive detective time to redact the investigation. She added that the legal unit must review the redacted investigation/report before it can be provided to the requestor. Chief Strauss explained that staff anticipates that the proposed fee schedule will diminish the number of requests for copies of voluminous reports/investigations.

Committeemember Davidson voiced reluctant support for staff's recommendation and noted that his approval is based on the premise that the number of requests for voluminous reports/investigations will be reduced. He stressed the importance of charging appropriate fees for work performed.

Chief Strauss informed the Committee that staff will continue to monitor the cost of responding to public information requests.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced the opinion that the actual cost of responding to some requests from the public can be so expansive that it precludes recovery by the City.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked staff for the presentation.

3. Hear an update on the Field Training Officer (FTO) Program.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated that the Field Training Officer (FTO) presentation is part of a process to update the Police Committee on various sections and programs within the Police Department.

Police Commander Rick Clore addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and reported that the FTO program staff consists of one lieutenant, two sergeants, four full time administrative Field Training Officers and 61 Field Training Officers that are assigned throughout the patrol bureau. Commander Clore reported that Mesa began a structured Field Training Officer program in 1978 and in 1994, when Mesa began its first academy class, the Field Training Officer program was formalized into an 18-week program. Commander Clore stated that from 1994 to 1997, if an officer in training did not meet the City's standards by the end of the 18-week program, the officer was either dismissed or transferred to a civilian job within the department. He added that in 1997, the program was reevaluated and modified to better accommodate the needs of the trainee by allowing the trainee to progress at his/her own speed throughout the program with success based upon demonstrative proficiencies over the course of the program, resulting in various completion rates.

Commander Clore referred to graphics on display in the Council Chambers which illustrated the FTO Class 13 advancement rate of officers throughout the four phases of the 18-week program. Commander Clore commented on the various rates of advancement through the four phases and stated that approximately 50% of the officers in Class 13 completed the 18-week program ahead of schedule, which allowed them to be out serving the community sooner.

Commander Clore said that the goal of the FTO program is to provide officers with one year's worth of training in a four month period and that officers are required to handle a certain number of various types of calls to gain complete exposure to the variety of calls they will receive and respond to as a patrol officer.

Commander Clore noted that the restructured program has resulted in higher employee retention/lower attrition rates. He noted that because it costs the City approximately \$40,000 to hire an employee and send the employee to the Police Academy, it is the goal of the FTO program to graduate officers to become long-term, productive members of the Police Department and the community.

Discussion ensued regarding the success of the FTO program since 1997; the fact that the dropout rate has reduced by approximately 50%; the fact that Mesa's FTO program has been adopted by the Arizona Peace Officers Standards and Training Board as a state-wide model; and the fact that Police Departments throughout the nation have also adopted Mesa's FTO program.

Committeemember Pomeroy congratulated Commander Clore and the Police Department for modifying the program to fit the needs of the trainee.

In response to a question from Committeemember Davidson regarding the length of the program, Commander Clore clarified that the 18-week program fits the needs of the trainee and the department and that there is no plan to condense the program.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked Commander Clore for the presentation.

4. Discuss and consider recommendations regarding sex offender community notification procedures.

Chairman Kavanaugh commented on the fact that Arizona law requires local Police Departments to notify residents when registered sex offenders relocate to their neighborhood. He added that the manner in which notifications are made varies among the different communities.

Police Commander Dave Zielonka and Sergeant Steve Stahl addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item. Commander Zielonka stated that Sergeant Stahl is the sergeant over the Sex Offender Notification

Enforcement and Tracking Team (SONET) and that SONET is part of the Center Against Family Violence. Commander Zielonka reported that SONET is responsible for managing approximately 1000 sex offenders within the City and that the SONET staff consists of Sergeant Stahl and five detectives whose primary mission is to surveil and manage the sex offenders that reside in Mesa and conduct community notifications when a sex offender moves to the City or relocates within the City.

Commander Zielonka stated that staff is requesting approval to change the manner in which community notifications are conducted and explained that over the past five years, whenever a sex offender relocates to or within Mesa, SONET has made personal, door-to-door notifications, talking to residents and delivering flyers to every household within the new neighborhood of the sex offender. He added that in conducting the notifications over the past five years, SONET has learned that some neighborhoods have numerous sex offenders moving in and out of the neighborhood requiring numerous notifications in the same neighborhood and often regarding the same offender. Commander Zeilonka noted that through the repeated door-to-door notifications and also through public education and media releases, residents have become educated regarding sex offender notifications. Commander Zielonka said that based on these facts, staff now recommends that community notifications be conducted by mailing fliers to homes and businesses in the appropriate neighborhood and added that this change in policy will greatly reduce the manpower that is spent on neighborhood notifications.

Commander Zielonka commented on the activities of SONET, including: SONET has performed 176 community notifications since June of 1996; SONET performs an average of three notifications each month; the community notifications are done on Thursday evenings; Mesa Police Department policy requires SONET to conduct periodic follow-up visits to each offender to ensure they are residing where reported and to update any personal information; each SONET detective is responsible for managing approximately 200 sex offenders; the time requirements of the door-to-door notifications detract from the pro-active types of monitoring activities performed by SONET detectives, including visits to offenders.

Commander Zielonka discussed the notification process, including: each community notification takes approximately 10 hours of SONET detectives' time; between 40 to 70 officers are utilized to conduct notifications; the door to door notifications are done between the hours of 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m. on Thursday evenings; briefings prior to notifications take approximately 1-2 hours; and the average cost of each notification is approximately \$3,200. Commander Zielonka noted that some overtime costs associated with community notifications are recoverable from the State, but the funds are limited. Commander Zielonka added that community notifications can be conducted by mailing a flyer to each household in the neighborhood and that the cost of doing so would be approximately 10% of what it is currently costing the City to do door-to-door notifications.

In response to a question from Chairman Kavanaugh, Commander Zielonka stated that in addition to the mailers, the SONET team would continue the current practice of conducting community meetings on a case-by-case basis. He added that SONET routinely notifies day care centers, all schools, including private schools, within the targeted neighborhood and also notifies the Mesa Public Schools Administration regarding each sex offender relocation notification. Commander Zielonka noted that each flyer utilized with community notifications advertises the Department of Public Safety's (DPS) website, which identifies all sex offenders in the State of Arizona by name, address and zip code.

In response to a question from Chairman Kavanaugh relative to determining the geographical area of notification, Commander Zielonka stated that State law does not dictate how notifications are performed or the area to be notified. He explained that SONET determines the geographical area of an affected neighborhood by considering nearby main arterial roads in relation to the location of the sex offender's residence.

Commander Zielonka commented on five alternatives to the mailer method of notification: 1) continue the current practice of door-to-door notifications in conjunction with media releases and community meetings on a case-by-case basis; 2) conduct notifications through community meetings only; 3) conduct notifications by media release only; 4) utilize the DPS website; or 5) use any combination of the foregoing. Commander Zielonka added that the mailer method of notification would inform the same number of households as the door-to-door method.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that with the door-to-door method of notification, approximately 30% to 50% of residents are not at home or do not answer the door; the fact that when there is no response, flyers are left in the door and often intercepted by children of the household; that it is staff's opinion that with the mailer method of notifications, SONET detectives would be able to conduct more timely follow up visits with sex offenders and more actively monitor the whereabouts of sex offenders within Mesa, and the fact that SONET would continue to conduct community meetings and maintain a strong relationship with the Mesa Public School System regarding sex offender notifications.

Commander Zielonka commented on the fiscal impact of staff's proposal and reported that the average cost of each notification will be reduced from \$3,200 to approximately \$300 and that a "tabber" machine must be purchased to facilitate preparation of the mailer at the cost of \$3,745 (plus tax).

Commander Zielonka reported concurrence with staff's proposal from all members of the SONET unit, Chief Strauss, Chief Poulan, the Community Action Teams and the bike units from the various districts that assist with the door-to-door notifications, and a small sampling of community Block Watch Captains.

Committeemember Pomeroy expressed the opinion that a mailed flyer is more likely to reach an adult of the household than a flyer left at the door, and suggested conducting sex offender community notification by mail as a pilot project for a one year period of time.

In response to a question from Committeemember Davidson regarding citizens' responses to door-to-door notifications, Sergeant Stahl explained that the responses are varied, some residents are happy for the face-to-face contact, but the general response in the neighborhoods where repeated notifications are conducted, often regarding the same sex offender, has evolved during the past five years to a sense of apathy.

Discussion ensued regarding the use of volunteers when doing door-to-door notifications, the fact that a minimum of 40 officers are utilized with each notification; and the fact that a volunteer is always accompanied by an officer with each household contact.

Committeemember Davidson expressed support for door-to-door notifications and expressed the opinion that the personal, door-to-door notification of the whereabouts of sex offenders is highly valued by the community as a whole.

Commander Zielonka said that the practice of doing door-to-door notifications has provided a great opportunity to educate the community regarding the information available regarding sex offenders and their whereabouts and has resulted in heightened awareness of this issue. He added that staff proposes to continue personal contact with residents through community meetings on most Level III offenders, in conjunction with the proposed mailer method of notification.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Davidson, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation to conduct community sex offender notifications by mailing flyers to homes and businesses in the appropriate neighborhood be approved as a one-year pilot project with subsequent report to the Police Committee regarding the success or failure of the program.

Committeemember Davidson clarified his second to the motion by stating that he is supportive of moving the issue to the full Council for further discussion but is opposed to discontinuing door-to-door notifications.

Chairman Kavanaugh voiced support for the motion and emphasized the importance of soliciting feed back from the community through Block Watch Captains and other neighborhood groups regarding the method in which community notifications are conducted. Chairman Kavanaugh also acknowledged the time constraints involved in door-to-door notifications and voiced support for ongoing public education regarding the wide array of sources regarding this issue that are available. Chairman Kavanaugh concurred with Committeemember Pomeroy's opinion that a mailed flyer is more likely to reach an adult in a household than a flyer left at the door.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Kavanaugh-Pomeroy
NAYS - Davidson

Chairman Kavanaugh declared the motion carried by majority vote.

Chairman Kavanaugh expressed appreciation to staff for their presentation.

Chairman Kavanaugh advised the Committee that with their concurrence, additional updates regarding various areas of operation within the Police Department will be presented to the Committee during future meetings and that any specific areas of interest should be communicated to Chief Strauss and City Manager Mike Hutchinson.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Police Committee meeting adjourned at 10:34 a.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Police Committee Meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 29th day of March 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 2001.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK