

POLICE COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 13, 2003

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 13, 2003 at 10:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Rex Griswold, Chairman
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mike Whalen

STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

(Items on the agenda were discussed out of order, but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Hear a report and consider a recommendation on false alarm activations in Mesa.

Police Chief Dennis Donna, Assistant Police Chief Ron Poulin and Police Commander Rick Clore addressed the members of the Committee relative to this agenda item.

Commander Clore reported that last year, the Mesa Police Department responded to approximately 21,000 false alarm activations, at an estimated cost of \$900,000 annually. He explained that in an effort to decrease the number of false alarm calls and reduce subsequent Police Officer responses to the calls, staff is recommending a proposal to amend the City's Alarm Ordinance and also change the dispatch priority for Police responses to burglary alarm calls. Commander Clore stated that the Ordinance was last updated in 1996, and that it is appropriate at this time to revise the Code to ensure that it conforms to other model policies nationwide.

Commander Clore advised that the first element of the proposal includes the implementation of an annual alarm permit renewal program at a cost of \$10 per permit. He noted that the process would provide the Police Department with a means by which to maintain updated permit/records information, whereby immediate contact could be made with alarm permit holders in the event of a false alarm. Commander Clore added that currently, permits are updated every three years and there is no renewal fee.

Commander Clore stated that the proposal's second component includes an increase in fine assessments on an escalating scale. He advised that the proposed fee schedule is as follows: No assessment for the first two false alarms; a \$50 fine for the third false alarm; a \$100 fine for the fourth false alarm; a \$150 fine for the fifth false alarm, and a \$200 fine for six or more false

alarms. Commander Clore added that Panic/Hold-up Alarm users would receive no assessment for the first false alarm; a \$100 fine for the second false alarm, and a \$200 fine for three or more false alarm calls.

Commander Clore informed the members of the Committee that the proposal also recommends a reduction in Police response time from the current "priority one" to "priority two." He explained that a priority one call must be dispatched within two minutes of being received, while a priority two call must be dispatched within 30 minutes. (In 2002, the average dispatch time for all priority two calls was 16.9 minutes.) Commander Clore added that the modification would allow the homeowner, business owner and alarm company additional time in which to cancel the alarm and permit the officers to respond to more urgent calls.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Commander Clore clarified that if an individual cancels an alarm call prior to an officer's arrival, it would not be considered false alarm activation.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the proposal's implementation will require initial startup costs of approximately \$75,000 for a new alarm software program and \$50,000 for one full-time employee (FTE) to handle the increased workload related to the annual renewal program; that the \$10 annual renewal fee will offset these costs; that the Police Department's originally designed in-house computer software program generates only limited information needed to support the current Alarm Ordinance; that the purchase of a commercial software application is essential for the success of the annual renewal program, and that the software will provide officers with updated permit/records information prior to responding to a false alarm activation.

Committeemember Walters expressed support for staff's recommendations. She voiced concerns relative to the three alternatives that were outlined in staff's report, but acknowledged that they are merely model policies and not staff's recommendations.

Further discussion ensued relative to the verified response program, and possible payment options regarding the annual alarm permit renewal program.

Chairman Griswold expressed concerns regarding a change in the Police dispatch priority for burglary alarm activations from the current priority one to priority two.

In response to Chairman Griswold's concerns, Chief Donna assured the Committee that if a Panic alarm call is received by the Department, it will be considered a priority one call. He added that the Department maintains the highest-level response time relative to emergency calls throughout the City and added that those calls are treated with the highest respect.

It was moved by Committeemember Thom, seconded by Committeemember Walters, to recommend to the Council that the recommendations of staff relative to amending the Alarm Ordinance, as previously outlined, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Griswold thanked staff for the presentation.

2. Hear a presentation and consider proceeding with the design phase for the proposed Police Technical Services Building.

Police Chief Dennis Donna, Assistant Police Chief Ron Poulin and Forensic Services Administrator Jon Kokanovich addressed the Committee relative to this agenda item.

Mr. Kokanovich provided a Power Point presentation in the Council Chambers and highlighted some of the achievements of the Mesa Police Department. He reported that the Department is one of only 18 agencies in the United States that is ASCLD/LAB and CALEA accredited; that it has an outstanding reputation Statewide and nationally, and that it is ranked as the top State agency for its Driving Under the Influence (DUI) enforcement program, as well as its investigations aided by DNA.

Mr. Kokanovich explained that in order for the Department to maintain its national accreditation as a Crime Laboratory and also to become accredited in fingerprint and crime scene services, it is imperative that a new Police Technical Services Building be designed and constructed prior to the Crime Laboratory's re-accreditation in April 2006. He said that the proposed 70,000 square foot facility would house the Crime Laboratory, ID Laboratory, Crime Scene Technicians, three vehicle and large item examination bays, Supply Section and new evidence drying rooms. He added that the City Court Building will gain approximately 7,600 square feet and that the Police Evidence and Police Records Sections will acquire additional space as well.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that during the Crime Laboratory's last National Accreditation inspection, inspectors raised a number of issues (DNA examination space, DNA examination area versus analysis area locations, evidence exam scheduling challenges, multiple areas working together in the same building) that were all attributed to the lack of space in the current facility; that the Crime Laboratory has a backlog of more than 240 DNA cases; that with its national accreditation status, in FY 2002/2003, the Crime Laboratory received \$220,000 in Federal DNA grant funds and anticipates receiving additional funding for FY 2003/2004; that the Crime Laboratory's accreditation is essential in order to maintain the Police Department's reputation in court and with the legal community and the media, and that security will be enhanced for both the Mesa City Court and the Police Department if the Crime Laboratory is relocated to a separate facility.

Mr. Kokanovich further commented that the City Engineering staff has prepared a design contract for the facility, which is proposed to be sited for the parking lot immediately north of the main Police Station. He stated that the Police Department already has approximately \$500,000 in bond funds earmarked for the design costs, and added that the cost of the facility is estimated at \$16 million.

Committeemember Walters expressed support for proceeding with the design phase of the Police Technical Services Building. She also stressed the importance of soliciting input from the surrounding neighbors regarding the location of the facility.

In response to Committeemember Walters' concerns, City Manager Mike Hutchinson assured the members of the Committee that the proposed design contract includes a neighborhood outreach component. He added that staff is working closely with the residents to resolve any issues regarding the siting of the facility.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Thom, to recommend to the Council, that staff's recommendation that they proceed with the design phase of the Police Technical Services Building, be approved.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that Mesa's Crime Laboratory no longer conducts DNA testing for other municipalities, unless authorized by the Police Chief; that a Citizen Advisory Committee will be formed this summer to review the City's bond needs for the next five years, and that Quality of Life sales tax funds will not be available for the design phase of the Technical Services Building.

In response to a series of questions from Councilmember Whalen regarding the build-out of the "public safety campus," Mr. Hutchinson suggested that it may be appropriate for the Technical Services Building's design team to address space needs for the area in an effort to alleviate future overcrowding.

Carried unanimously.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Police Committee meeting adjourned at 10:38 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 13th day of March 2003. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK