

# COUNCIL MINUTES

July 9, 2007

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on July 9, 2007 at 4:45 p.m.

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker  
Rex Griswold  
Tom Rawles  
Scott Somers  
Claudia Walters  
Mike Whalen

## COUNCIL ABSENT

Kyle Jones

## OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady  
Debbie Spinner  
Barbara Jones

Mayor Hawker excused Councilmember Jones from the entire meeting.

### 1. Review items on the agenda for the July 9, 2007 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflicts of interest declared: 4a, 4b, 4c (Jones); 7i (Hawker)

Items added to the consent agenda: 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d

Items removed from the consent agenda: 6a and 9g

Items deleted from the agenda: None

### 2. Hear a presentation and provide direction on the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program.

Police Chief George Gascon introduced Police Fiscal Management Supervisor Lisa Quedens, Dr. Deb Duvall, Superintendent of Mesa Public Schools, and Dr. Dave Allison, Associate Superintendent of the Gilbert Unified School District.

Chief Gascon reported that the Police Department, in conjunction with the Mesa Unified School District and the Gilbert Unified School District, is proposing a potential funding source that would allow School Resource Officers (SROs) to be reinstated in Mesa's junior high schools for the 2007/08 school year. He explained that at previous Study Sessions, staff discussed the possibility of retired police officers serving in the role as SROs, but noted that to date, the Department has received limited interest from retirees regarding the position. Chief Gascon

noted that Human Resources staff is currently in the process of reviewing Tempe's SRO policy wherein the community contracts with retired officers to serve as SROs. He added that in order to meet the necessary SRO staffing levels at Mesa junior high schools for the upcoming school year, he recommended that fulltime police officers function in that capacity.

Ms. Quedens provided a brief financial analysis of staff's proposal. Her comments included, but were not limited to, the following: that during the FY 2005/06 budget cycle, funding for seven SRO positions in Mesa junior high schools was eliminated; that the Mesa Unified School District has agreed to pay 83% of the salaries and benefits (10 out of 12 months) for SROs at seven junior high schools for the 2007/08 school year; that the net cost to the City would be approximately \$109,000; that the Gilbert Unified School District has also agreed to pay the cost for two SROs at district schools in Gilbert; that the net cost to the City in that regard would be an estimated \$31,000; that because the seven SRO positions were eliminated from the budget, staff is requesting that contingency funds be allocated for the net City costs; and that the Mesa Unified School District asked if the City could possibly fund the hiring of anywhere between seven and 12 additional school resource officers. (Note: 10 would cost \$157,000 and 12 would cost \$190,000.)

City Manager Christopher Brady clarified Ms. Quedens' statement and noted that in speaking with Chief Gascon, it was determined that the SRO positions would not be funded initially out of contingency, but rather through the Police Department's budget. He explained that staff would determine whether there were any savings realized within the budget that could pay for the City's portion of the SRO Program, and if that were not the case, then it may be necessary to fund the positions out of contingency. Mr. Brady added that the recently adopted budget for FY 2007/08 did not identify funding for the SRO Program because staff had anticipated that retired police officers would participate in the program.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that if retired police officers were contracted as SROs, the labor costs would be borne by the school districts and the Police Department would pay for equipment and supervision; that with regard to the two SROs allocated to the Gilbert Unified School District, two middle schools would share one SRO and the remaining officer would be located at a high school; and that if additional retirees express interest in the SRO program, the Police Department could possibly accommodate the Mesa school district's request for additional SROs.

In response to an inquiry from Vice Mayor Walters, Dr. Duvall clarified that Mesa Public Schools has not received notification from the Arizona Department of Education concerning available funding for the placement of SROs at Mesa high schools. She explained that at the present time, Mesa Public School's high school SRO grant pays not only for the SROs at the six comprehensive high schools, but also for one school resource officer at Hendrix Junior High School, which is part of the Chandler School District.

Dr. Duvall stressed the importance of the school district retaining seven SROs at selected junior high schools in the 2007/08 school year. She added that it would be the intent of the district to increase that number when funding becomes available.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the SROs would work five days a week, eight hours a day (as opposed to four ten-hour days for most police officers); that recruitment for the program may be difficult and individuals may be "forced" to accept the assignment; and that the Police Department would consider the school resource officers taking their vacations to coincide with the schools' schedules.

Councilmember Rawles expressed appreciation to staff and the school districts for their efforts to seek alternative funding sources for the SRO program. He stated that he would prefer to fund no more than nine SROs at this time (7 in Mesa and 2 in Gilbert), but noted that he would be willing to revisit the issue in the future.

Councilmember Whalen stated that he is confident there are dedicated retired police officers who would be willing to participate in the SRO program and “give back” to the community.

Dr. Allison commented that the parents in the Gilbert Unified School District have expressed support for the SRO program and noted that the officers play an important role in ensuring the safety of the students. He also stated that unlike other Mesa high schools, when Desert Ridge High School was constructed, it was necessary to fund its own SRO program because grants through the “Safe Schools Project” were no longer available.

In response to a question from Mayor Hawker, Chief Gascon stated the opinion that the SRO program is a priority for the Police Department. He explained that the school resource officers are often able to intervene before an incident occurs on campus, become familiar with the student population, and prevent radio cars from being dispatched to the schools in order to handle disputes.

Councilmember Griswold stated that having taught a business class in a high school setting, he has witnessed firsthand the trust that is formed between students and the SROs. He expressed support for the program and added that he looks forward to retired police officers participating in the program.

Councilmember Somers clarified that city boundaries are not necessarily contiguous with school districts and that is the reason the City of Mesa would pay for SROs not only within the Mesa Unified School District, but also the Gilbert Unified School District.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Rawles, that staff proceed with the funding proposal with the Mesa Unified School District and the Gilbert Unified School District regarding the hiring of nine school resource officers for the 2007/08 school year.

Mayor Hawker declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

Mayor Hawker thanked everyone for the presentation.

3 Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

Mayor Hawker: 202 Freeway Ribbon Cutting Ceremony; Embraer Groundbreaking Ceremony for a new Executive Jets Service Center at Williams Gateway Airport; Metro Rail Meeting

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated the schedule of meetings is as follows:

Monday, August 13, 2007, TBA – Study Session

Monday, August 13, 2007, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, August 16, 2007, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, August 23, 2007, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, August 27, 2007, TBA – Study Session

Monday, August 27, 2007, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

5. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

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KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 9<sup>th</sup> day of July 2007. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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