

# COUNCIL MINUTES

November 9, 2006

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 November 9, 2006 at 7:30 a.m.

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Rex Griswold  
Kyle Jones  
Tom Rawles  
Scott Somers  
Claudia Walters  
Mike Whalen

## COUNCIL ABSENT

Mayor Keno Hawker

## OFFICERS PRESENT

Christopher Brady  
Debbie Spinner

(Vice Mayor Walters excused Mayor Hawker from the meeting.)

### 1. Hear a presentation, discuss and provide direction on initiatives to improve City neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Services Department Director Kari Kent introduced Lead Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator Mike Renshaw, Police Chief George Gascon, and City Prosecutor John Pombier, who were prepared to address the Council regarding this matter.

Ms. Kent displayed a PowerPoint presentation in the Council Chambers and reported that the purpose of this agenda item is to provide staff with the opportunity to introduce multi-departmental approaches to address community needs and enhance the quality of life for Mesa residents, businesses and visitors through the coordinated delivery of City services. (The presentation is available for review in the City Clerk's Office.) She explained that the tools, which are designed to build strong neighborhoods, include the Neighborhood Outreach Action Plan, Neighborhood Action Teams, and a Community Prosecution Program. Ms. Kent added that the program goals include a coordinated response to neighborhood issues through, among other things, the identification of stakeholders, prioritization of projects, a multi-departmental action plan, and ongoing evaluation.

Ms. Kent reported that as a result of staff reductions in the Neighborhood Outreach Office for FY 2006/07, staff assessed existing services in order to reprioritize those that are most critical to support Mesa neighborhoods. She stated that feedback was obtained from internal and external partners, all of which was incorporated into the Neighborhood Outreach Action Plan and Building Strong Neighborhoods Initiative. Ms. Kent also spoke regarding the various components of the Neighborhood Outreach Action Plan, which focus on City Council Support, Neighborhood Support, Neighborhood Revitalization, Collaboration and Partnership, and Development Community Support.

Discussion ensued relative to the Neighborhood Outreach Coordinators, who are assigned to specific Council districts as part of the Neighborhood Outreach Action Plan; that their duties include, but are not limited to, the following: assisting Mesa residents in accessing City services; responding to neighborhood issues and requests for assistance; facilitating neighborhood meetings and enhanced communication; collaborating with the City Council Office relative to neighborhood issues that require multi-departmental responses; coordinating neighborhood improvement projects and implementing the proposed Building Strong Neighborhoods Initiative; participating in interdepartmental Neighborhood Action Teams to enhance coordinated and timely responses to complex neighborhood issues; and assisting other City departments through the dissemination of program information.

Mr. Renshaw offered a short synopsis of the Building Strong Neighborhoods Initiative, which is designed to preserve and strengthen Mesa neighborhoods by providing residents and businesses with education, training and access to various City resources to address neighborhood issues and concerns. He noted that the initiatives would begin with neighborhood surveys to identify issues and/or a potential neighborhood project. Mr. Renshaw stated that subsequently, residents and businesses would be apprised of the survey results and provided information regarding what City and outside resources are available to resolve the issues identified during the survey process.

Mr. Renshaw further advised that the Building Strong Neighborhoods events, which would be four weeks in duration, would occur within designated neighborhood areas. He commented that staff proposes to conduct one event per Council district during the first 12 months of the program and possibly expand to two events in subsequent years. Mr. Renshaw added that under the current proposal, the Neighborhood Outreach Coordinator assigned to a particular event would maintain office hours in the neighborhood from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. during the week in order to respond to questions or concerns raised by the residents.

Mr. Renshaw offered examples of current City resources that could be utilized to affect positive changes during the Building Strong Neighborhood events (i.e., Clean Sweep containers, Code Compliance education and awareness, Neighborhood Watch/Crime Prevention programs, and Fire Life Safety Education/Community Emergency Response Teams).

Chief Gascon reported that historically, the Mesa Police Department's Community Action Teams (CAT) have worked on various issues in the community that may or may not involve enforcing laws. He explained that in this regard, it was found that other City departments might also have addressed the same issues, resulting in residents not receiving the best service that Mesa had to offer. Chief Gascon referred to the November 9, 2006 City Council Report, which addressed Neighborhood Action Teams, and said he would forgo an extensive overview of the report at this time.

Chief Gascon noted that in his professional opinion, there is a nexus between nuisances, neglect in neighborhoods and overall crime. He displayed a series of "before and after" photographs depicting abandoned houses, graffiti on walls, and deteriorated alleys located in the City and their improved appearance as a result of efforts implemented by various City departments. (The photographs are available for review in the City Clerk's Office.)

Chief Gascon reviewed the following options with regard to coordinating multiple City services to more effectively address citizen concerns:

1. Continue to have Police CAT Teams work on neighborhood issues with the ad hoc support of other City Departments. (No additional costs.)
2. Create enhanced Neighborhood Action Teams with part-time dedicated support personnel from various City departments (i.e., Police, Code Compliance, Fire, City Prosecutor's Office, Neighborhood Outreach, Tax & Licensing, and Building Safety). (No additional costs.)
3. Create four full-time dedicated Neighborhood Action Teams for Citywide coverage. (Additional costs would be incurred.)

Chief Gascon recommended that the Council approve Option 2 and also direct staff to continue to work on Option 3 as a possible alternative.

Mr. Pombier reported that Community Prosecution is defined as a long-term, proactive partnership between the Prosecutor's Office, community residents, law enforcement and public and private agencies and organizations, which utilizes the authority of the Prosecutor's Office in targeted areas to solve problems, improve public safety and enhance the quality of life in the community. He explained that citizen concerns that could be addressed through this process include, for instance, trespassing, drug dealing, disorderly conduct, illegal dumping and property crimes. Mr. Pombier further advised that the goal of Community Prosecution is to prevent crime and reduce the number of arrests and traditional prosecutions. He added that his office would work with the offending individuals to determine the most appropriate manner in which to abate the situation and not result in a court process.

Mr. Pombier indicated that in conjunction with Community Prosecution, in early 2007, staff will present to the Council a series of revisions to the City Code to better protect neighborhoods, increase punishment, and possibly refer certain cases to the City Court for disposition as opposed to a hearing officer. He added that during the budget hearing process, the Council might wish to consider dedicating additional resources to this program.

Vice Mayor Walters stated the opinion that budget issues should not be addressed outside the context of the normal budget cycle process. She said she would prefer that any items discussed today that could impact the budget be brought back to the Council at that time.

Councilmember Griswold voiced support for staff's proposal to implement a multi-departmental approach to address community needs. He said that such a method would prove successful, for example, in holding slum landlords accountable or perhaps loaning tools to Mesa residents to enable them to clean up their property and generate pride in their neighborhoods.

Councilmember Whalen commented that because of limited staffing in the Police and Neighborhood Services Departments, in his opinion, it is imperative that the Council establish a list of priorities with regard to Mesa neighborhoods. He said that he believes the City should consider implementing a Housing Code and educate the public with regard to the manner in which the law could benefit the community without limiting the value of private home ownership.

Extensive discussion ensued relative to the Police Department's records management system; Mesa's Neighborhood Block Watch Program; the proliferation of halfway houses in the City of

Mesa; and the fact that the City operates under Federal law regarding halfway houses and cannot discriminate against disabled individuals.

Vice Mayor Walters requested that this issue be presented to the Council at a future Study Session.

Councilmember Jones noted that enforcement of the noise ordinance has historically been a low priority for the Police Department. He requested that Chief Gascon address the issue and suggested that it may be appropriate for officers to briefly respond to the calls in an effort to resolve such matters. Councilmember Jones also expressed support for Option 2, but said he would prefer to transition to Option 3 pending future budget discussions regarding this item.

Councilmember Jones further expressed concern regarding the lack of a centralized location at the City wherein residents can interface with staff, lodge complaints or concerns and noted that there is often little, if any, follow-up and the issues oftentimes "fall through the cracks." He also requested better coordination between Block Watch parties and the Neighborhood Outreach Office.

In response to Councilmember Jones' comments, Mr. Pombier clarified that a major component of the Community Prosecution Program would include a Community Prosecutor who would attend neighborhood meetings, Block Watch events and serve as the City's "contact person." He explained that that individual would then seek information/advice from the most appropriate staff members in order to resolve a resident's concerns.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the current noise ordinance.

Councilmember Rawles stated that with regard to the proposed City Code revisions, he would prefer that staff first focus on public safety, followed by health and public nuisance issues. He stated that he is generally supportive of staff's proposals, but voiced concern regarding the premise underlying Community Prosecution (i.e. insufficient sentences and overcrowded jails) and the concept of a drug free zone ordinance. Councilmember Rawles further indicated that if the Council is adamant about implementing the programs/projects that have been discussed today, then it is their "overriding challenge" in the next two years to make budget adjustments elsewhere within the organization in order to provide sufficient funding to do so.

In response to a question from Councilmember Somers, City Manager Christopher Brady clarified that the recent reorganization of City management is designed to "push down" the decision-making process and accountability with regard to the priorities established by the Council. He explained that it is imperative that staff address the needs of its customers, deliver those services, and meet their expectations. Mr. Brady also stated that unless the Council directs him otherwise, staff intends to implement Option 2 and create enhanced Neighborhood Actions Teams composed of the previously identified City departments. He added that there are only three Neighborhood Outreach Coordinators for the entire City, plus one supervisor, and said there is no funding available for new programs/projects in the upcoming fiscal year. He said that each of the Coordinators is assigned to two Council districts and invited the Councilmembers to become familiar with the individuals who represent their respective districts.

Councilmember Somers expressed support for the City's reorganization efforts and commented that the programs discussed this morning would be more successful as a result of the restructuring.

Vice Mayor Walters offered a series of comments included, but not limited to, the following: an organizational-wide focus should be placed on assisting citizens in resolving issues or concerns no matter whether the "initial contact" staff member has expertise in a specific area or not; that the issue of halfway houses in Mesa has been addressed by the Council on many occasions and she is working to address the issue at a Federal level once again; that she would encourage every City department to examine how, after it has provided basic services to the community, it could recover costs expended for any services offered beyond that level; that in her opinion, there are many City services she considers public safety services that are not defined as such; that Mesa currently has various laws/codes in effect that are not being enforced that could address some of the concerns that have been discussed this morning; and she would consider the creation of a slum landlord law, although the action would require a Charter change.

Code Compliance Director Ray Villa provided a brief overview of a new process that will be implemented in January 2007 by the Code Compliance Division designed to educate Code violators prior to citations being issued.

Vice Mayor Walters commented that she has received feedback from Mesa residents who have advised her that when they place calls to the Police Department's non-emergency phone number, they tend to feel as though their complaints are being dismissed. She requested that Chief Gascon work to change that perception.

Further discussion ensued relative to Council's direction to Police staff to install "Neighborhood Watch" signs in Mesa neighborhoods whose residents are willing to pay for the signs; that low-income neighborhoods should have the ability to apply for grants in order to receive funding to pay for the cost of similar signs; and the purpose of the CAT teams.

Councilmember Somers indicated that although the City may not be able to recover costs associated with the specific programs discussed this morning, there may be other programs within the respective City departments in which cost recovery could be achieved and those funds could then be allocated to the above-referenced programs.

Vice Mayor Walters stated that it is the direction of the Council that staff move forward with Option 2 and continue to work on Option 3 in the context of next year's budget process.

Mr. Renshaw introduced the City's Neighborhood Service Coordinators who were present in the audience.

Vice Mayor Walters expressed appreciation to staff for the informative presentation.

2. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of various boards and committees.

- a. Parks and Recreation Board meeting held on October 5, 2006.
- b. Utility Committee meeting held on October 19, 2006.

It was moved by Councilmember Griswold, seconded by Councilmember Rawles, that receipt of the above-listed minutes be acknowledged.

Vice Mayor Walters declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

3. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

Councilmember Whalen:	Meeting with Police Chief George Gascon, his staff and Public Safety Association board members.
Councilmember Griswold:	Meeting regarding the Stonebridge development; appearance on Channel 15 News to promote Mesa's Veterans' Day Parade.
Vice Mayor Walters:	Child Crisis Center Event.

4. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Christopher Brady stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, November 16, 2006, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Friday, November 17, 2006, 8:30 a.m. – Council Retreat

Monday, November 20, 2006, TBA – Study Session

Monday, November 20, 2006, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

5. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

6. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 9:10 a.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 November 2006. 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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