

COUNCIL MINUTES

April 18, 2005

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 April 18, 2005 at 4:30 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Rex Griswold
Kyle Jones
Tom Rawles
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Debbie Spinner
Barbara Jones

1. Review items on the agenda for the April 18, 2005 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: 4h, 4k, 4l, 6a (Hawker); 4n, 7c (Walters); 6a, 6b (Whalen)

Items added to the consent agenda: 5f

Items deleted from the agenda: 5n

2. Hear an update, discuss and provide direction on:

a. Mesa Channel 11 programming issues.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that items a and b may be the subject of potential budget discussions and requested that the Council provide input to staff with regard to these matters.

Assistant to the City Manager Ellen Pence referred to the April 15, 2005 City Council Report and provided a brief overview of the kinds of programs currently broadcast by Mesa Channel 11. She stated that original programming is written and produced in-house by the station employees and City staff are used as on-air talent; that Mesa Channel 11 broadcasts programs produced by other organizations (i.e., Maricopa County, Congressional representatives or neighboring communities); that a bulletin board provides information on various topics when a video program is not being broadcast; that Mesa Channel 11 is designated as the Local Emergency Information Channel to provide information to Mesa residents in case of an emergency situation; that staff performs extensive pre-production and post-production work for the live broadcast of

meetings from the Council Chambers; that rebroadcasts are totally automated; and that Mesa Channel 11 has reached capacity on its automated system and increased programming would dramatically impact the capability of the station's video server.

Ms. Pence commented that in an effort to respond to several Councilmembers' interest in expanding the live broadcasts of meetings, she conducted an analysis of various meetings that were not broadcast and the associated costs if they had been. She stated that in 2004, there were 24 Council Committee, 7 Ad Hoc Committee to Study Police Oversight and 13 Ad Hoc Redevelopment Committee meetings. Ms. Pence explained that staff estimates that each hour of live broadcast costs \$150, with a minimum of four hours for pre and post-production activities. She noted that the estimated cost to broadcast the above-referenced meetings would have been \$14,400, \$4,200 and \$6,600, respectively.

Ms. Pence further expressed concerns regarding the limited staffing at Mesa Channel 11 (six employees, one ASU intern and freelance video operators); that funds are not available at the current time to expand the closed captioning service to include Study Sessions and Planning & Zoning meetings; and that the budget for Mesa Channel 11 does not include the purchase of replacement or new equipment.

Ms. Pence concluded her presentation by stating that because of the extensive workload of Mesa Channel 11 employees relative to live broadcasts, rebroadcasts and original programming, staff does not recommend that the number of live broadcasts be expanded.

Councilmember Griswold requested that staff provide the Council with a breakdown of Mesa Channel 11's costs to produce its original programming. He stated that because Councilmembers engage in extensive discussions regarding various issues at their Council Committee meetings, in his opinion, it would be helpful to broadcast such meetings so that Mesa residents could be apprised of such action. Councilmember Griswold also suggested that because of the station's current budget constraints, it may be appropriate to alternate between the live broadcasting of, for example, the Police Committee meetings and the "On the Beat" program, which highlights the Mesa Police Department. He added that when programs are rebroadcast and the screen indicates "Recorded Earlier," he would prefer that the actual date of the original broadcast be displayed.

In response to Councilmember Griswold's comments, Ms. Pence clarified that original programming produced at Mesa Channel 11 varies in cost, depending on the complexity of the program, the research and the number of rehearsals that are required.

Councilmember Rawles stated that he is not supportive of expanding Mesa Channel 11's current programming.

Mayor Hawker stated that he is comfortable with the current level of programming. He also complimented staff for broadcasting not only local programming, but regional issues as well that impact the City of Mesa and Maricopa County.

Vice Mayor Walters commented that although she would be supportive of broadcasting the Council Committee meetings, she recognized that there is insufficient funding to do so. She suggested that it may be appropriate for the Council to reconsider this item in the future if there is a change in the cost of producing the live broadcasts.

In response to a question from Councilmember Jones, Ms. Pence clarified that Mesa Channel 11's bulletin board lists all of the Council Committee meetings, the citizen advisory board meetings and refers citizens to the City's web site for agendas and minutes.

Mr. Hutchinson complimented Mesa Channel 11's staff for their professionalism and dedication.

Mayor Hawker thanked Ms. Pence for the presentation.

b. Various options to reduce false burglar alarm response rates.

Councilmembers Whalen and Jones declared potential conflicts of interest and said they would refrain from discussion/consideration of this agenda item.

Police Chief Dennis Donna and Police Commander Rick Clore addressed the Council relative to this agenda item. Chief Donna stated that the purpose of this item is to provide an update regarding Mesa's false alarm rates and to present information on the concept of a Verified Response Program (VRP).

Commander Clore reported that the notion of reducing false alarm responses is being considered nationally by many police organizations, including the City of Mesa. He commented that since the adoption of comprehensive changes in the City's alarm ordinance last June, the Police Department has seen a 3.8% reduction in false burglar alarm calls (comparing July to December of 2003 to the same period in 2004). Commander Clore advised that last year, of the estimated 16,000 false burglar alarm calls, only 259 resulted in actual burglaries. He also noted that an estimated 95% of the approximate 25,000-plus residents who have alarm permits pay a monitoring fee and would be placed at a disadvantage when their alarms goes off because the VRP requires independent verification.

Commander Clore briefly outlined the three basic concepts of VRP as follows:

- **Full Verified Response Program.** Police agencies do not accept calls for, or respond to, burglar alarms unless a third party verifies a crime has actually occurred.
- **Partial Verified Response Program.** Alarm monitoring companies must receive multiple indications from sensors or a third-party confirmation of a crime in progress prior to police being dispatched.
- **Discretionary Response.** All burglar alarms are accepted and processed, however, dispatchers use discretion, based upon information received from an alarm company, as well as calls for service in the surrounding area, to determine if police are dispatched.

Commander Clore suggested that the Council may wish to consider the following alternatives in regard to the VRP:

- **Enhanced verification, which requires alarm-monitoring companies to make two telephone calls to responsible parties on alarm activations prior to contacting police for dispatch.**

- **Suspended response which, after a specific number of false alarms are received at a location, the police are no longer dispatched to burglar alarms at that location.**
- **Lower priority for burglar alarm calls. Only Mesa and Tempe prioritize burglar alarms as significant crimes in progress. This option would allow more time for alarm system owners who inadvertently set off their alarms to contact the alarm monitoring company and cancel the call.**
- **Continued use of current ordinance. This option would allow more time to monitor the current ordinance to assess whether the decrease in false burglar alarm calls continues.**

Chief Donna commented that it generally does not take a lengthy period of time for an officer to respond to an alarm call unless there is a need to locate the responsible party, reset the alarm and check the building to ensure that it is secure. He also noted that some citizens have a fear of crime and a heightened sense that they or their property are unprotected. Chief Donna added that those agencies that have implemented a Verified Response Program have received significant feedback from the alarm industry and others as to the valid use of police resources on this type of calls.

Mayor Hawker commented that he has always objected to the fact that those individuals who do not have burglar alarm systems are required to subsidize the cost of Mesa police officers who respond to homes and businesses that do. He stated that that is not fair or equitable and there should be full cost recovery for such responses.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the average alarm call in Mesa, which takes an average of 17 minutes to respond to, results in an indirect cost to the City of approximately \$750,000 in personnel costs; that the Salt Lake City Police Department has implemented the Full Verified Response Program; the manner by which the Mesa Police Department currently responds to false alarm calls, which is generally considered a lower priority call; and that if Mesa implemented a Full Verified Response Program, it would allow the Department's officers to devote more time to traffic stops, street activity and neighborhood policing.

Mayor Hawker stated that he is leaning toward a Full Verified Response Program, but questioned whether that would really be the most effective option.

In responding to Mayor Hawker's comments, Chief Donna advised that staff also suggested alternatives such as a Partial Verified Response or a Discretionary Response, which would implement changes in a less dramatic fashion than the Full Verified Response.

Vice Mayor Walters voiced concerns regarding the City "announcing" to the criminal community that it is considering lowering the priority of burglar alarm calls. She also suggested that it may be appropriate for the City to charge a fee, for example, \$25 for the officer's response to the first false alarm call and no longer allow free calls for service.

In response to Vice Mayor Walters' suggestion, Commander Clore stated that staff had not considered such a possibility until today when he spoke with a representative of the Salt Lake City Police Department. He explained that Salt Lake charges \$50 for the first false alarm call, and additional charges up to \$400 for the fourth call.

Councilmember Griswold expressed support for allowing one free false alarm response annually, but then issuing fines to those individuals thereafter. He also said that he prefers the enhanced verification option.

Councilmember Thom voiced support for increased fees for false alarms.

Councilmember Rawles expressed support for the Partial Verified Response Program, as well as charging a fee to businesses or residents when the Police have been dispatched to the premises more than one time to respond to a false burglar alarm call.

Mayor Hawker directed staff to bring back a revised ordinance incorporating the Council's suggestions regarding some type of verification and a reduction in the number of free responses to false alarm calls.

Mayor Hawker expressed appreciation to staff for the presentation.

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

- a. Transportation Advisory Board meeting held March 15, 2005.

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

Carried unanimously.

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

Councilmember Griswold

Aircraft Pilots' Convention at Dobson Ranch

5. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, April 21, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, April 25, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Budget Hearing

Tuesday, April 26, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Budget Hearing

Thursday, April 28, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, April 28, 2005, 8:00 a.m. – Budget Hearing

6. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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 18th day of April 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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