



OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

June 21, 2010

The Public Safety Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on June 21, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Dennis Kavanaugh, Chairman
Dina Higgins
Scott Somers

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Alfred Smith

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on a hotel/motel ordinance.

Chairman Kavanaugh advised that this item was a status update regarding a proposal for a hotel/motel ordinance. He stated that staff was requesting an additional 90 days to work on the matter. Chairman Kavanaugh thanked staff for their efforts thus far and also for arranging the briefings that the Committeemembers have had with Mesa and Phoenix staff members.

Police Commander Steven Stahl displayed a PowerPoint presentation (**See Attachment 1**) and reported that several months ago, the Committee asked the Mesa Police Department (MPD) to research the possibility of enacting a hotel/motel ordinance for the City of Mesa. He explained that since that time, staff has researched similar ordinances in other cities and conducted several meetings with stakeholders in the hotel/motel industry.

Commander Stahl indicated that tourism and the hotel/motel industry are very important to the City of Mesa. He said that it was equally important that the quality of life for residents and visitors in and around Mesa's hotels/motels be maintained through improved public safety efforts. Commander Stahl noted, however, that the transitory nature of the hotel/motel industry tends to increase its susceptibility to criminal activity and added that Mesa currently does not have a hotel/motel ordinance that the MPD can utilize as a crime-fighting tool.

Commander Stahl provided a short synopsis of the anticipated benefits of a hotel/motel ordinance as follows:

- Reduce calls for police service, which would allow the MPD to redirect limited resources.
- Discourage career criminals from utilizing Mesa hotels/motels to conduct illicit and illegal activities.
- Allow the hotel/motel industry to self-regulate.
- Improve conditions for hotel/motel customers and community members through improved premises safety.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that in 2009, 6% of all warrant arrests and 4% of all drug arrests in Mesa occurred at hotels/motels; and that of all the hotels/motels in Mesa, the top 10 hotel/motel “problem” properties accounted for 49% of all warrant arrests and 64% of all drugs arrests.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Somers, Commander Stahl explained that Phoenix has a similar situation as Mesa regarding “problem” hotels/motels. He stated that as a result of certain enforcement action that the Phoenix Police Department (PPD) has taken and the adoption of a hotel/motel ordinance, the agency has been able to “clean up” many of those properties.

Committeemember Somers stated that he would be interested in reviewing the percentage of warrant arrests and drug arrests at Phoenix’s “problem” hotel/motel properties.

Police Chief Frank Milstead responded that of an estimated 500 hotels/motels in Phoenix, a squad from the PPD’s Major Offender Bureau “works” seven of those properties on a regular basis. He stated that in the last 24 months, criminal activity at those properties resulted in the arrest of more than 3,300 felons and the release of another 2,500 felons because they were un-extraditable. Chief Milstead added that on occasion, individuals arrested for criminal activity at Phoenix hotels/motels have had receipts from Mesa hotels/motels in their possession.

Commander Stahl continued with his presentation and reported that some of the current practices that negatively impact effective policing and encourage criminal activity in and around local hotels/motels include operators not obtaining identification from guests, failing to maintain accurate records, and renting rooms by the hour or monthly.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated that another practice he was aware of that could be a problem indicator was hotels/motels that only accept cash for payment.

Commander Stahl confirmed Chairman Kavanaugh’s statement and noted that criminals often choose to deal only in cash to avoid detection.

Commander Stahl further reported that it was the recommendation of the MPD that a hotel/motel ordinance be implemented. He said that it would assist Police efforts in addressing criminal activity at “problem” properties on an immediate basis, be helpful for investigative purposes and ensure that the quality of life of Mesa residents and visitors was not compromised by criminal activity.

Commander Stahl also advised that the hotel/motel ordinance would require that the operators obtain the name/date of birth of at least one of the persons renting the room and the total number of occupants. He said such information would be maintained for the duration of the stay. Commander Stahl added that the ordinance would require that hotels/motels place certain obligations on guests such as prohibiting them from registering under a false name or providing false identification.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the MPD held six meetings with stakeholders from the hotel/motel industry; that the MPD shared "best practices" with industry representatives; that as a result of improved communications between the parties, the MPD and hotel/motel representatives agreed to: 1.) Develop a Hotel/Motel Review Board (which could include a Police member) for the purpose of self regulation; 2.) Develop training for hotel/motel employees; and 3.) The MPD would develop a better understanding of current technological trends in the industry, which may, at some point in the future, require that the ordinance be amended.

Chairman Kavanaugh remarked that on a recent business trip, he used his credit card at a kiosk to check into his hotel and was not asked to provide any form of identification.

Committeemember Somers stated that in some respects, technological advances might aid the MPD in reducing crimes at hotels/motels and especially by tracking the use of credit cards.

Chief Milstead responded that the MPD is more interested in apprehending individuals who use cash and "live below the radar" as opposed to guests at a hotel that use a credit card. He also stated that another important component of the ordinance is that once the beat officers build a relationship with the hotel/motel operators, it is anticipated that the operators would be more inclined to notify the MPD when a criminal activity occurs.

Commander Stahl briefly highlighted some of the remaining challenges that must be resolved between the MPD and the hotel/motel stakeholders prior to an ordinance being drafted:

- Whether to obtain a license plate/vehicle description for vehicles parked on hotel/motel property.
- One-year record retention.
- The scope of MPD's inspections.
- Technology advancements that conflict with proposed inspection methods.

Commander Stahl commented although the MPD has made great progress in working with the industry stakeholders to craft key elements of a hotel/motel ordinance, staff requests an additional 90 days to complete their work, after which time they would return to the Committee with a draft ordinance. He also noted that he is working with industry representatives to determine the "threshold" for when a hotel or motel should be brought to the attention of the Hotel/Motel Review Board.

Chairman Kavanaugh indicated that what he heard Commander Stahl say is that there are several valid purposes for moving ahead with the ordinance. He stated that those include reducing criminal activity at Mesa's hotels/motels, increasing the MPD's ability to apprehend criminals, and creating a safer environment for hotel/motel employees and guests. Chairman Kavanaugh further noted that staff has requested additional time to continue their discussions

with hotel/motel industry stakeholders. He requested input from his fellow Committeemembers as to whether they believe this issue remains a priority and if they would consent to staff's request for additional time.

Committeemember Higgins voiced support for the manner in which the policy is moving forward. She stated that the proposed requirements would not be an "overwhelming burden" on the operators, nor would they be an imposition on the guests.

Committeemember Somers noted that it was unfortunate that a representative of the hotel/motel industry was not present in the audience to be commended for the manner in which the industry has "stepped forward" to deal with this issue. He also commented that tourism has been identified as one of four key economic development strategies in Mesa and said it was important for citizens to feel safe when they visit Mesa. Committeemember Somers added that he was very encouraged by staff's efforts and would support staff being given additional time to work on the matter.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that MPD staff deals with sensitive information on a daily basis; and that any guest registry information that the hotel/motel operators provided to the MPD would be handled in an appropriate manner.

Chairman Kavanaugh stated that it was the consensus of the Committee that staff be granted an additional 90 days to work on the proposal for a hotel/motel ordinance. He also suggested that this matter be included as a tentative item on the Committee's September agenda.

Chairman Kavanaugh thanked staff for the presentation.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 4:32 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Public Safety Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 21st day of June 2010. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

LINDA CROCKER, CITY CLERK