

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

April 23, 2007

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 April 23, 2007 at 3:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Mike Whalen, Chairperson
Kyle Jones
Tom Rawles

COUNCIL PRESENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Brady

1. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

2. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on additional potential capital bond projects for the Fire Department.

Fire Chief Harry Beck said that an earlier presentation to the Council addressed the department's highest priorities for capital projects, which included four new fire stations, five replacement fire trucks and other items that could be funded through the sale of bonds. He advised that this presentation would outline additional high priority capital items that would not affect the operating budget.

Assistant Fire Chief Gary Bradbury displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to outline the additional capital needs of the Fire Department. He reported that the Citizen Bond Committee reviewed \$71 million in bond requirements in October of 2005. Chief Bradbury added that shortly after the City Council reduced the bond proposal to \$46.9 million (in current dollars) in March of 2006, the Fire Department presented a request for an additional \$13.9 (in current dollars) million in bonds. He advised that the presentation today would address the items included in the proposal for \$13.9 million.

Chief Bradbury advised that the Strategic Master Plan for fire response estimates that the City will require 32 fire stations at build out. He stated that the City presently has 17 fire stations and 8 vacant parcels on which to construct stations. Chief Bradbury outlined the following items in the proposal that would require an additional \$13.9 million in fire bonds:

Williams Gateway Airport Equipment

Chief Bradbury stated that the Mesa Fire Department is responsible for providing fire protection services to Williams Gateway Airport (WGA) including staffing, maintenance and repair of all fire equipment. He noted that an Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) vehicle is included in this proposal at a cost of \$1 million to replace the existing crash vehicle that was transferred to the

City of Mesa and WGA from the military. Chief Bradbury reported that the existing vehicle, which was intended to provide service for two years, has been in service for eight to nine years. He advised that the City of Mesa facilitates the purchase of the vehicle and then the City is reimbursed by WGA.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Chief Bradbury advised that the City receives full reimbursement from WGA, but he was unaware of how the reimbursement would be accomplished.

City Manager Christopher Brady concurred that the City would receive reimbursement, and he noted that the City of Mesa is the major stakeholder in the WGA Authority. He added that another possible option could be reimbursement from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

Public Safety Training Facility

Chief Bradbury advised that the Public Safety Training Facility was master planned in 1987, and he noted that the City is approximately thirteen years behind in the implementation of the plan. He stated that \$3.1 million would address a phased improvement for a classroom/office building to be shared by both the Police and the Fire Departments. Chief Bradbury said that classrooms would be utilized for recruit training, special operations training, and continuing education classes and that offices would be utilized for defensive tactics and personnel/wellness, including defensive tactics training, fire staff offices and a fitness/rehab area for members on light duty. He noted that defensive tactics training is presently conducted in the fire equipment apparatus bay.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Jones, Chief Bradbury stated that although drawings for the facility have not been completed, staff developed the cost estimate based on a conceptual idea of the required square footage and current construction costs. He said that the locations of future spaces are identified in the Public Safety Master Plan, but the architectural drawings have not been completed.

Chief Bradbury advised that \$1.095 million would be utilized for special operations training props, which include a collapsed building, rubble pile typical of a collapse or explosive incident, confined space for rescue, a power line tower and aircraft props for fire and rescue.

Chief Beck explained that the cost estimate was based on data obtained from other jurisdictions that have many of the special props in place.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jones, Chief Beck responded that some specialized training is not being addressed and that other training is accomplished by sharing resources with other jurisdictions. He noted that previous bonds approved by the voters did not include funds for the design function.

Chief Bradbury stated that \$1.7 million is required to develop command training classrooms, which would be a planned/phased improvement. He said that this project requires specialized simulation equipment for Police and Fire and driver safety simulation equipment.

Fire Stations/Facilities

Chief Bradbury reported that the remodel and expansion of Fire Stations 205, 209, 210, 213 and 214 is estimated to cost \$2,807,000. He noted that the proposed renovations support current operational needs, such as:

- Decontamination areas.
- Diesel exhaust removal.
- Fitness areas.
- Turnout storage.
- Community rooms.

Chief Bradbury advised that in many older stations, turnout storage is located in the apparatus bay.

Chief Beck added that recent national research indicates that turnouts stored in an apparatus bay tend to collect residual particles of diesel fuel, which poses a danger to fire fighters wearing the equipment as they enter the scene of a fire. He emphasized the importance of addressing this issue for safety reasons.

Chief Bradbury continued the presentation by noting that future locations for fuel vaults are being identified to enable fire apparatus to remain within their response area when refueling.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jones, Chief Bradbury advised that the proposed fuel vaults would be located in areas that are central to several stations. He noted that existing facilities include the East Mesa Service Center, the Dobson location and Falcon Field.

Responding to a question from Chairman Whalen, Chief Bradbury stated that environmental permits for the fuel vaults would be obtained as a part of the project.

Firefighter Breathing Air Replenishment System

Chief Bradbury advised that \$528,000 is required to retrofit and purchase the equipment to implement this system in the City Plaza Building.

Fire Station Emergency Alert System

Chief Bradbury said that the current 20-year old Zetron alert system, which electronically alerts the fire station crews that an emergency response is required, is no longer supported by the manufacturer. He reported that upgrading the system at all stations would cost \$585,000.

Chief Bradbury advised that the total cost for these additional capital projects is \$13,995,000. He referred to the current bond program spreadsheet (see Attachment 1) and noted that the amounts listed for "Fire Apparatus Replacement" in 2012 and 2013 (\$2.65 million per year) would be an ongoing need in future years regardless of the bond cycle.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Chief Bradbury stated that the turnaround time from the point of placing the order to receipt of the fire apparatus is six to nine months and then another thirty days after receipt to prepare the equipment for use by the department.

Mr. Brady responded to a question from Chairman Whalen regarding the possibility of placing an order on a "contingency" basis. He advised that the source of the cash funds would have to

be identified in the event bonds were not approved, and he added that this amount would have a significant impact on the City's budget. Mr. Brady stated that this proposal is more than a typical five-year capital program. He added that a timing schedule for future bond elections would be brought forward for a future Council discussion.

In response to a series of questions from Committeemember Rawles, Chief Bradbury confirmed that the total of \$46.9 million in fire bonds is the amount approved by the Council and that the total does not include the additional \$13.9 million in capital projects outlined at this meeting. He also advised that certain training facility projects included in the \$13.9 million could be accomplished separately without requiring all projects to be implemented. Chief Bradbury also confirmed that the proposal would address improvements to the existing Public Safety facility.

Committeemember Rawles expressed support for the following projects: the safety vehicle for WGA; the special training props; remodeling the fire stations; upgrading the alarm system; and implementing the breathing apparatus system in the City Plaza Building. He explained that his concern regarding the remaining items relates to voter acceptance of the secondary property tax. Committeemember Rawles stated the opinion that the City should be cautious regarding the bonds proposed to the voters, and therefore he would support the additional \$6 million in bonds for the projects he identified, but he would not support the entire \$13.9 million. He further stated the opinion that specialized training, which directly affects firefighting activities in the field, is more important than the classroom facilities. Committeemember Rawles suggested that the City gain voter acceptance for the concept of a secondary property tax before presenting additional bond proposals.

Chief Beck noted that the projects included in the additional proposal for \$13.9 million are items remaining in a ten-year plan, which will affect the firefighter training process.

Committeemember Jones concurred that the comments expressed by Committeemember Rawles represent the political reality within the City of Mesa.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Jones, Chief Beck stated that the Public Safety classrooms are extremely busy during the day and in the evening. He advised that the department might be required to consider other classroom alternatives, such as mobile or modular units.

Chief Bradbury noted that the increased number of retirements requires a larger number of recruitments for both Police and Fire, which has resulted in overlapping academies. He stated that an existing problem is a lack of locker room and shower space.

Committeemember Jones stated that although he shares Committeemember Rawles concerns that the voters could reject a larger bond package, he recognized that the additional \$13.9 in bonds would fund serious Public Safety issues and he recommended that the entire proposal move forward.

Committeemember Rawles noted that the Fire Department classified the request for \$13.9 million as being secondary to the initial request for \$46.9 million in bonds. He stated that he would like to explain to the citizens of Mesa that the bond proposal enables the Fire Department to maintain four-minute emergency response time rather than a proposal to provide shower facilities for trainees.

Chairman Whalen stated the opinion that a 2007 bond election would not provide a sufficient amount of time to properly educate the community regarding the proposal. He recommended a 2008 bond election, and he noted that approval of bonds in a 2008 election would further delay the availability of the facilities for use by the department into the 2010 to 2012 timeframe. Chairman Whalen suggested that the description of the proposed projects reflect their impact on the training process. He advised that the training campus has had no major improvements in the past ten years during which time the City experienced a dramatic increase in population. Chairman Whalen stated that although he concurred with the comments made by Committeemember Rawles that the need for funds to maintain the proper emergency response times is easier to explain to the voters, a lack of training increases the possibility of injury to police and fire officers. He explained that a typical fire or police officer requires five years of training in order to achieve the desired skill level. Chairman Whalen noted that the Council reduced the original \$71 million fire bond package proposed in October 2005 to \$46.9 million in March of 2006. He stated the opinion that the Fire Department needs the additional bond funds, and he expressed support for moving forward with a bond package of approximately \$60 million.

Chief Beck stated that a failure to address the department's training needs does impact the department's emergency response times and that the projected training needs for fire and police recruits in the next five years would be difficult to accomplish in the existing facility. Chief Beck added that although the department prioritizes people and response capability above all else, eventually the lack of investment in support areas could result in the organization not being able to provide the required levels of service.

Chairman Whalen said that he would support only the \$46.9 million bond package if the election is held in 2007.

Committeemember Jones noted that new fire stations and police sub stations require staffing and ongoing operating costs, but that an investment in the training facility would not require the same increases to the staffing level.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Chief Beck advised that funds with which to purchase land for four of the eight future fire stations are included in the \$46.9 million bond package.

Chairman Whalen noted that the City's cost to the purchase land for fire stations is likely to double or triple in future years.

Committeemember Rawles stated that he could consider supporting the additional \$13.9 million for a 2008 bond election, but he expressed support for a 2007 bond election in order to implement the projects included in the primary bonds for both the Police and Fire Departments. He recommended that the timing of the election and the scope of the bonds move forward for consideration by the full Council with the understanding that his preference is for a 2007 election without the additional \$13.9 million in fire bonds.

It was moved by Committeemember Rawles, seconded by Committeemember Jones, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation for an additional \$13.9 million in Fire bonds be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Whalen thanked Chief Beck and Assistant Chief Bradbury for the presentation.

3. Hear a presentation, discuss and make a recommendation on additional potential capital bond projects for the Police Department.

Police Chief George Gascón advised that the City of Mesa is presently under-policed with an average of 1.9 officers per thousand in population (based on a population of 455,000) compared to the desired level of 2.1 officers per thousand. He stated that a significant emphasis on recruitment and training would be required as Mesa's population continues to increase and as a large number of officers retire under the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP). Chief Gascón reported that effectively assimilating the required number of officers into the organization requires that the department hire approximately 140 to 150 individuals per year beginning in 2008-2009. He noted that the typical officer requires three to five years of experience to attain the desired level of effectiveness in the field. Chief Gascón stated that Police Fiscal Management Supervisor Lisa Quedens was present to provide information on additional capital funding needs.

Ms. Quedens displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an overview of the proposal. She noted that the original \$59 million bond package approved by the Citizen Bond Committee in October of 2005 was reduced by the Council to \$36.9 million in March of 2006. Ms. Quedens advised that the department is requesting an additional \$33.1 million in additional bonds for the following projects:

New Public Safety Dispatch Center

Ms. Quedens reported that the cost for a new dispatch center is estimated to be \$11,451,000, which does not include the cost of land acquisition. She stated that the current facility is operating at capacity and has insufficient space to accommodate future growth. She added that the current center should be maintained as an emergency backup system when the new Dispatch Center becomes operational.

Replacement of Dobson Police Station

Ms. Quedens advised that the current location is at capacity and will be unable to address future increases in calls for service. She stated that the total cost to replace this facility, including \$2 million for land acquisition, would be approximately \$9,200,000. She noted that acquiring land in the western area of the City could pose a challenge.

Future Eastside Holding Facility

Ms. Quedens said that the facility is estimated to cost \$3,200,000. She noted that the existing facility in the basement of Police Headquarters was last expanded in 1975 and is presently insufficient to address current demands for service. She added that locating holding facilities in the eastern and western sections of the City would increase efficiency as the City continues to grow.

Remodel of Police Headquarters Holding Facility

Ms. Quedens said that this proposal would expand the current 27 bed holding facility by adding 15 beds at an estimated cost of \$350,000. She explained that the current facility is operating at capacity.

In response to a question from Committeemember Rawles, Chief Gascón advised that the Eastside facility would accommodate approximately 35 prisoners. He also emphasized that the remodeled holding facility would be utilized for processing in order to meet current demands and that the facility would not serve as a jail.

Remodel of the Old Court Building

Ms. Quedens advised that converting the first floor to an arraignment center would maintain the ability to conduct court arraignments at the Justice Complex and reduce the number of prisoner transports. She stated that the estimated costs are \$8,525,000.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the basement of the old Court Building would be utilized for the Crime Lab and the second floor would be utilized some personnel presently located in the Metro Division and would provide storage for materials presently housed in a warehouse.

Committeemember Rawles questioned the reason for not locating the arraignment center in the basement, and he noted that the proposal for the new court building included facilities for "out of custody" arraignments. He requested additional data regarding these facilities.

Chairman Whalen also requested that staff provide information on the plans for the approved crime lab facility and the manner in which the operations of the facilities are coordinated.

In response to a question from Committeemember Rawles, Chief Gascón confirmed that the entire cost of the remodeling project is included in the estimate of \$8,525,000. He noted that delaying the project could result in higher costs, and he advised that staff would provide the additional information requested by the Committee.

Master Plan Funding

Ms. Quedens advised that the City's Engineering staff estimates that a Police Department Master Plan would cost \$400,000. She stated that this would be the first master planning process for the department, which could address future needs for Police facilities based on growth, identify locations for future Police Stations, and determine the feasibility of constructing a jail.

Chief Gascón noted that the construction of facilities in the past was based on input from the Police Department. He stated that a consultant could provide some expert advice regarding how best the department could address the City's long-term growth.

Mr. Brady suggested that the City set aside General Fund dollars in the next few years in order to implement a Master Planning process. He noted that the City would not typically fund this type of expenditure with bonds.

Chief Gascón concurred with Mr. Brady's comments that the General Fund was a better funding source for a Master Planning process.

Chairman Whalen recommended that the proposal for a Master Plan be considered as a high priority. He expressed concern regarding the abandonment of the Dobson Substation. He noted that the neighborhood is very accustomed to having this substation, and he added that securing a new location in south/central Mesa would be very difficult.

Chief Gascón stated that the department intends to remain in the Dobson Ranch neighborhood, and he advised that vacant retail space has been considered as a site for a future station.

Mr. Brady confirmed that the City intends to continue to have a substation in the Dobson Ranch neighborhood. He noted that the constraints of the current location limit the ability of the Police Department to serve that area of the City. He added that there may be opportunities in a non-traditional area and that the City would seek community involvement and public input regarding this issue.

Responding to comments by Chairman Whalen, Chief Gascón concurred that future population density in the area is unknown, and he noted that a consultant could provide assistance in addressing that issue.

In response to a question from Committeemember Rawles, Chief Gascón said that discussions were in the early stages regarding possible sites for a new Dispatch Center. He noted that the new Dispatch Center would have to be located in a different grid, and he added that the existing system backup agreement with the City of Phoenix addresses communications required in an extreme emergency. Chief Gascón advised that the presence of a redundant system was extremely important, and he stated that an extended failure of the present system could result in a very difficult situation for the community.

Committeemember Rawles concurred that there was an evident need for a new Dispatch Center.

Chairman Whalen noted that the current Dispatch Center has been in operation for twenty years.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Rawles, Capital Improvement Project Administrator Anthony Araza reviewed the bond package approved by the voters approximately six years ago that included a new court building, a Technical Services Building, and remodeling the old city court building. He noted that in the intervening years, many projects have been reprioritized and interim improvements were required, such as the Police Headquarters basement and the Red Mountain Substation. Mr. Araza added that the costs to construct the new court building have escalated.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that some of the bond funds were allocated to voter-approved items that had a higher priority; that the \$21.7 million budget for the Technical Services Building is expected to be on target; that the new Technical Services Building will house the identification function, the photo lab, and a large section of the Crime Lab; that other specialized areas of the Crime Lab will be located in the basement of the remodeled court building; that the site of the new Technical Services Building is adjacent to the old court building; and that the existing parking garage, with the addition of a structure that connects to the Technical Services Building, would provide ample parking.

Committeemember Jones recommended that the new Dispatch Center be located as close as possible to a "backbone" system in order to minimize the possibilities of communication failures.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that \$850,000 is included in the first bond package for evidence freezer storage; that additional evidence storage will be required in the future; and that there is an increased requirement for evidence retention.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Rawles, Mr. Brady advised that the original bond proposal totaled approximately \$270 million. He noted that additional changes and adjustments to the original proposal would be presented to the Council along with an estimate of the maximum secondary property tax rate on a per resident basis.

It was moved by Committeemember Rawles, seconded by Committeemember Jones, to recommend to the Council that the additional Police Department bond proposals, excluding the \$400,000 for an outside consultant to prepare a Master Plan, be approved.

Chief Gascón stated that the proposals brought forward to the Committee at this meeting are critical needs.

Chairman Whalen suggested that a Council Study Session be dedicated to this issue and that each item be presented in full detail, including the need and purpose for each item. He noted that the replay of televised Study Sessions on Channel 11 could serve as a tool to educate the public.

Mr. Brady suggested that when the Council reaches a consensus regarding the list of projects to be addressed, details could be presented to the public.

Chairman Whalen requested that the full Council be provided with detailed information on the proposed Public Safety projects.

Committeemember Rawles concurred with Chairman Whalen that the full Council should discuss the issue and reach a consensus regarding the list of projects to be considered by the voters.

Chairman Whalen called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 4:39 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 23rd day of April 2007. 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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Attachment (1)