

POLICE COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 30, 1999

The Police Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 30, 1999 at 5:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Pat Pomeroy, Chairman
John Giles
Bill Jaffa

COUNCIL PRESENT

Jim Davidson

STAFF PRESENT

C.K. Luster
Jan Amdahl
Linda Crocker
Mike Hutchinson
Joe Padilla
Bryan Raines
Tom Remes
Becky Richardson

STAFF PRESENT (CONT.)

Jim Schweisthal
Jan Strauss
Marilynn Wennerstrom
Mike Whalen
Others

OTHERS PRESENT

Robbie Sherwood
Others

1. Further discussion and consideration concerning providing additional photo safety red light cameras at specific intersections including left-turn cameras at certain intersections.

Police Chief Jan Strauss introduced Assistant Police Chief Mike Whalen who provided background information regarding staff's recommendation that staff be directed to proceed with eighteen locations for Photo Safety Red Light cameras and mobile speed vans within the City of Mesa.

Chief Whalen stated that the Police Department has conducted a City-wide survey in an effort to determine locations where photo red light enforcement would be the most effective, with emphasis on intersections that reflect a large number of left turn red light violations. Chief Whalen added that a list of the top 50 accident intersections in the City were provided to the contractor, Lockheed Martin, which videotaped violations occurring at these intersections to determine violation rates. Chief Whalen stated that as a result, the Department is recommending that photo red light enforcement equipment be installed at the following left turn intersections: 1) Broadway and Dobson, 2) Alma School and Southern, 3) Southern and Country Club, 4) Power and Southern, 5) Power and Main, 6) Southern and Dobson, 7) Longmore and Southern; and at the following straight through intersections: 1) Country Club and University, 2) Southern and Country Club, 3) Mesa Drive and Southern, 4) Broadway and Mesa Drive, 5) Stapley and Main, 6) Broadway and Stapley, 7) Alma School and Broadway, 8) Alma School and Southern, 9) University and Mesa Drive, 10) Dobson and Southern and 11) Lindsey and University.

Chief Whalen stated that should the Council approve staff's recommendations, the installation of the photo safety equipment will be completed within 60 days of contract execution. Chief Whalen reported that the additional vans for the increased moving radar positions will be equipped and operational within ninety days of contract signing.

Chief Whalen added that “dummy” locations will not be included in Phase One and all 18 camera systems will be active. Chief Whalen noted that a provision exists in the contract, which states that if violation numbers drop (at an individual intersection) below the number of required minimum violations (18) for three consecutive months, the Department has the option of 1) leaving the camera in place, and paying a maintenance fee to the vendor, 2) moving the camera to another qualified location throughout the City, or, 3) moving the camera but keep the camera housing and flash mechanism in place to record violation data without photographing the incident.

Chief Whalen stated that the proposed contract also states that should the City, within the first 18 months of the contract, identify an intersection that is experiencing an increasing amount of accidents, a study of that intersection will be conducted by the vendor at no cost to the City. Chief Whalen noted that installation of equipment at additional locations would be without cost to the City, and added that this will allow the program to grow if the need occurs, and/or rotate units as required.

In response to a question from Chairman Pomeroy regarding the speed vans that are currently utilized, Chief Whalen stated that the vans are part of the existing contract.

Discussion ensued relative to minimum citation criteria, the fact that intersections that meet the 18 per day criteria will be installed at no charge to the City other than a percentage of the paid citation cost and staff's request that the Committee approve the recommendations.

It was moved by Committeemember Giles, seconded by Committeemember Jaffa, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation relative to the placement of 18 photo safety red-light cameras including left-turn cameras at certain intersections within the City of Mesa, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

2. Hear and discuss a report concerning TRAP (Theft Reduction Action Program).

Police Chief Jan Strauss introduced Sergeant Jim Schweisthal, a member of the Police Department's Central Patrol Division - Community Action Team.

Sergeant Schweisthal briefly outlined a highly successful program, the Theft Reduction Action Program (TRAP), which he assisted in developing and which has reduced the number of calls for service to the Police Department and decreased the number of shoplifting incidents. Sergeant Schweisthal noted that the pilot program was conducted at the Wal-Mart located at 1305 W. Main Street.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that shoplifting represents a \$20 billion a year problem in the United States, the fact that store personnel were educated on what to be aware of when dealing with theft and criminals, the fact that a stop sign was posted near the entrance to the store which states “The Mesa Police Department and Wal-Mart Working Together to Create a Safe Environment for All Our Shoppers,” and the fact that the sign has a psychological effect on people walking into the store contemplating shoplifting.

Sergeant Schweisthal stated that as a result of the program, an immediate decrease in the number of calls for service requiring a patrol response was noted and he attributed this decrease on the Summons in Lieu of Citation (SILOC) portion of the program which allows the officers to write reports and make a citizen's arrest. Sergeant Schweisthal advised that the crime prevention aspects of TRAP yielded immediate benefits and reduced the actual occurrences of shoplifting.

In response to questions from Committeemember Giles, Sergeant Schweisthal explained that Mesa Police has an office located on the side of the building where the officers can write reports, eat lunch and are accessible. Sergeant Schweisthal noted that the officers are not there on a full-time basis but that the officers and their presence have been extremely effective.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jaffa, Sergeant Schweisthal noted that if a shoplifter does not appear, it becomes a Warrant for their arrest and the Warrant's Division pursues tracking the people. If not enough people appear, Sergeant Schweisthal's team does the final chapter of TRAP, and pick them up themselves. They are then charged with Failure to Appear, Contempt of Court, which is still a misdemeanor. Sergeant Schweisthal noted that if the person had several shoplifting convictions, Ms. Simmonds turns those convictions into a felony. State Law indicates that if someone has two or more convictions in the State of Arizona, they can be charged with a felony for the third conviction.

In response to Committeemember Jaffa's question regarding mutual indemnification agreement with respect to liability where the stores provide a police officer or police station, Sergeant Schweisthal stated that the Wal-Mart office along with Attorney Roy Skaggs signed a wavier stating they would damages. Chief Strauss stated that the police officers are covered by the City. If there is any damage done to the store by the officers, the City is not liable.

Chairman Pomeroy thanked Sergeant Schweisthal and Police Chief Strauss and other individuals who developed the program for sharing the information with the Committee.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting of the Police Committee adjourned at 5:40 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Police Committee Meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 30th day of September, 1999. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1999

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK