

MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety Committee

FROM: Mary Costigan
Associate Corporation Counsel

DATE: October 31, 2008

RE: **Minutes of the Public Safety Committee Meeting held on October 14th, 2008**

Councilor Marshall, Chair of the Public Safety Committee, convened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. with Councilor Donoghue present. Councilor Duson joined the meeting at 5:45 p.m.

The Committee voted 2-0 to approve the minutes of the September 9, 2008 meeting.

The Committee then took action on the following items:

Crime Trends – Presentation by Chief Joseph Loughlin

Chief Loughlin began by stating that we still have a safe city. There are challenges that the Police Department faces, but they are doing a lot more with a lot less. Chief Loughlin said the department is using proactive problem solving, as well as directed patrol. Proactive steps include matters such as motor vehicle stops, special attention checks, warrant checks, bar checks and pedestrian checks.

Chief Loughlin used a Powerpoint to illustrate his next few points. Calls for service increased in 2007, which he believed was caused by the new proactive approach. There was also an increase of calls for service by type. Proactive calls, nuisance calls and calls reporting crimes all increased. Chief Loughlin noted that the proactivity responses were down a bit in 2008 because numbers in the force were down. He stated that in general the department was encouraging people to call in if they noticed anything suspicious.

Captain Vern Malloch explained that index crimes were ones chosen by the FBI to standardize crime reporting across the country. He spoke in particular to the incidents of robbery, aggravated assault and burglary in the City. He stated that drugs or alcohol are often involved in these kinds of crimes. He also noted that motor vehicle burglary was one of the most common crimes in the City.

Chief Loughlin spoke to arrest totals in the City over the past eight years. He stated that the increase in drug arrests was the most significant area of concern. He said that criminal enterprises are coming to Portland to set up shop, and he didn't want Portland to turn into a source city.

Councilor Marshall opened the floor for a question and answer session.

Charles with the Guardian Angels stated he was willing to help the City.

Phil Thompson had several questions. He asked when does domestic violence become assault. He wanted to know how many drug dealers and drug users were youth, and how old they were. He asked how much of the problem was with homeless people. He asked if the problems were arising out of Preble Street Homeless Shelter, and what those specific problems were related to. He wanted to know how much of an effect the bad economy was going to have on increasing robberies.

Nancy Page Akers stated that she was homeless and on the street because no one would do anything about her apartment. She also stated that the police department seems to have a bias against hate-mongers.

Eliot Burton stated that he had thought the evening was going to be about hate crimes. He said the rally the previous week had been really good, but there was no press there. He asked if there was a way to encourage organized religions to speak up.

Jan Beitzer of the Portland's Downtown District stated she thought there were a lot of misperceptions. She asked how the numbers play regarding neighborhoods, and if the patrols were sent out accordingly. She stated she would be interested in crime comparisons with other cities of our size across the country or in the northeast. She asked about the ratio of officers to population in cities of our size. She also stated she was seeing more problems and calls for service in the downtown area, particularly near the Museum of Art and the Eastland Park Hotel.

Tim MacNemara asked for a review of the process for determining hot spots.

Eileen Skinner, CEO of Mercy, asked if the City sets targets for improvement in comparing its statistics to other cities of our size using a strategic plan. She also stated she has seen how crime can become sophisticated, and asked if the City assessed the sophistication of its technology to match with modern crime.

Grace Greely asked about education regarding hate crime, specifically about getting the message out about judging people. She also asked what citizens can do to be more aware.

Alan Mooney, owner of property in Monument Square, stated he was concerned about the trend in the tone of people in the square, and about rising vandalism. He said he understood vandalism was second to serious crimes, but he thought it shouldn't be ignored.

Godfrey Wood, head of the Portland Chamber of Commerce, stated he was concerned with the perception of the increase in crime. He also mentioned the graffiti problem, and stated that the Chamber was prepared to work with the City to focus and get solutions.

Eric of Bull Feeneys stated that in his observation the assaults are becoming coordinated and not random. They involve a number of people, some used as spotters. He asked if there was going to be some sort of list on the City's website including repeat offenders in bars so the staff can check names. He stated that three of his employees have been attacked on their way home. He said they have a group walk to cars at night. He stated that he is now looking over his shoulder and never had to before. He stated he has also heard about people taking matters into their own hands, for example, with bars not reporting fights and settling it themselves.

Chief Loughlin stated he has seen the problems in the Old Port and the department is working on educating bar owners. He also stated the department floods the Old Port in high

season with patrol officers. He stated they are moving to coordinate establishments to communicate about certain individuals and ban them from the site.

Chief Loughlin then addressed the remaining questions:

- officers investigate domestic violence calls and make the determination of assault. He also mentioned there's been a lot of education and progress in this matter.
- The age of drug users spans the spectrum, but they are seeing more young users.
- There is a large homeless population in Portland, but there are many agencies set up to work with them. The police try to work with individuals to help with problems. Outreach workers are involved prior to calling the police, because in most cases the issue is not a police problem. There has been a lot of progress, but there's still a problem.
- If there is a spike of crime in one neighborhood, the department dramatically increases the number of officers on patrol there.
- When people are in stress, they resort to drastic measures, and the souring economy may well have an impact on increased criminal activity.
- Competition for jobs is not a problem, even with the large refugee community. The police released a DVD to all communities to let the public know what the police department does, and to offer an opportunity for anyone to assist.
- In response to the previous week's rally, the City wasn't involved, and therefore had no authority to contact the press.

Councilor Donoghue asked Chief Loughlin about the police presence on the islands.

Chief Loughlin responded that there are two officers per shift on duty on Peaks Island, and the fire boat is also a means of emergency response, although it is rarely used. He then returned to the public responses.

- Statistics relating to the various neighborhoods in Portland can be viewed on the City's website. On the City's intranet, there are biweekly reports about issues facing different neighborhoods. The department uses this information for directed patrols working with regular patrol teams. The department wants to continue using this proactive approach.
- Councilor Marshall stated that the crime comparison statistics to other cities our size are found in the City's annual reports, and that we are in the middle of the pack. Chief Loughlin agreed that this is generally correct.
- Chief Loughlin stated the department now has 153 officers, but needs more. Councilor Marshall also stated that it would be helpful to get the information related to the number of officers in comparison with the general population in the budget process.

- Hot spots are defined as a specific number of calls for service to a particular address. To figure out the problem the department works with community policing. In the case of a disorderly house, the department works with the landlord.
- The department is taking a look into the organization and structure of organized crime as its first steps toward a strategic plan. There is also a plan in place to tackle organized crime through the intelligence unit. The department has had a lot of meetings with federal agencies to consolidate efforts against organized crime.

November's meeting will be on Wednesday the 5th. The meeting was adjourned at 7:20 p.m.