

MINUTES

PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

FEBRUARY 24, 2021

Via Zoom

- I. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairperson Councilmember Ben Keathley.

- II. Roll Call:

Councilmember Ben Keathley, Ward II, Chairperson, Councilmember Mary Monachella, Ward I. Councilmember Dan Hurt, Ward III, Councilmember Tom DeCampi, Ward IV, Councilmember Mary Ann Mastorakos, Ward II, Councilmember Michael Moore, Ward III, City Administrator Mike Geisel, Chief Ray Johnson, Captain Michael Thompson, Captain Cheryl Funkhouser, Captain Dan Dunn.

- III. Approval of Minutes

The Committee members reviewed the minutes of the December 9, 2020 meeting. Councilmember Hurt motioned and Councilmember Monachella seconded to approve the minutes. The motion carried 3-0 (Councilmember DeCampi logged into the meeting at 5:35 PM and was unavailable for the motion on the minutes.)

- IV. Rivers Edge Park

Chief Johnson noted that concerns had been expressed at the last PH&S meeting about residents walking at the Rivers Edge Park hearing gun shots. Chief Johnson confirmed that there were no shots fired from the Police Department firing range.

Chief Johnson informed the Committee members that hunting is legal on land north of the levee and that hunting is allowed within the City on property of ten (10) acres or more with the permission of the land owner, and in compliance with Missouri Department of Conservation hunting regulations. Councilmember Moore asked the name of the adjacent land owners. Chief Johnson mentioned Mr. Andrew Brown, but did not know the other. The shots could also be coming from land across the river from neighboring St. Charles County.

Chief Johnson presented plans for additional signage for the adjacent private property alerting hunters that the park area is nearby (this would require the property owner's agreement). The City's sign shop would make the signs. Councilmember Hurt suggested the signs alert people that they are leaving park property, and Councilmember Monachella suggested signs also note dates of hunting seasons. Chief Johnson advised that there are multiple hunting seasons and the dates change annually.

The committee concurred with Chief Johnson's recommendation for the signage, and the Department will proceed with contacting property owners to seek approval and will install signs if agreeable.

V. Authorized Deer Hunts

- A. Chief Johnson reported that the City had received an anonymous complaint that contiguous property owners had not been notified of bow hunting. This complaint was investigated and determined to be "unfounded": All records on file at the Police Department indicated that proper notification had been made by the Suburban Deer Hunters.
- B. During past bow hunting seasons hunters and/or property owners have been required to notify contiguous property owners of hunting. The Public Health & Safety Committee directed at their last meeting, that the contiguous property notification form be modified to include a signature acknowledgement from the property owner and a copy retained with the other paperwork required for hunting. It was understood that an attempt to obtain the signature is required, but in some instances, the contiguous property owners will refuse to sign the form. The suggested form for notification has been revised and now provides for the signature of the contiguous property owner(s). This change was completed after the close of the 2020-2021 archery deer season and will be implemented for the 2021-2022 archery season.

Chief Johnson indicated that he had spoken with the Suburban Deer Hunters representatives, and they indicated that the regulations were impractical and they would be unable to comply as they are currently proposed.

Chief Johnson expressed his opinion that the City is over-regulating this activity. He reminded the committee that half of the community wants to cull the herd, while the other half wants to feed and protect the deer. In his opinion, the current notification requirements creates conflicts and complaints. Further, the notification is ineffective, as it often requires notification of property owners who are unlikely to be impacted or even aware of the hunting activity, and in other cases the notice requirements doesn't necessarily notify properties in the vicinity that might be impacted. He suggested that the notification requirements be modified so that only property owners impacted by deer retrieval or tracking be required.

Discussion ensued regarding notification. City Administrator Geisel reminded the committee that the City establishes the requirement for notification, but the City could not attest that the notifications have actually occurred. The City relies on the attestation of the hunter on the form submitted, but the City is not able to independently make that assurance. He concurs with Chief Johnson that the notification requirements are onerous and ineffective as currently required, but if the City Council desires to ensure the notifications occur, the only way the City could make such assurance would be to send the notices ourselves.

The Committee members voiced concerns regarding who is responsible for the notification, especially when properties are contiguous to common ground. Recently a hunter tracked a deer who had been shot by a bow hunter and wandered away. The hunter followed the deer tracks through common ground that was between two subdivisions. Residents bordering the common ground were upset at seeing the hunter tracking the animal. Discussion continued regarding who is responsible for notification to property owners that border common ground areas.

Councilmember Keathley suggested that the staff work on a better process for notification and Councilmember DeCampi agreed. The entire Committee voiced the directive that a copy of the notification letter sent by the hunter be kept on file along with a listing of those addresses to which the notifications were sent. This will be reviewed at an upcoming meeting of the Public Health & Safety Committee with plans to implement these processes during the next bow hunting season (September 15, 2021 through January 15, 2022).

VI. Crime Reduction/Prevention Strategy

Chief Johnson updated the Committee on the Chesterfield Police Department's Crime Reduction/Prevention Strategy that was implemented June, 2020. He reviewed the twelve specific strategies identified. It is still early for measurable results and any numerical metrics would be skewed by the impacts of the COVID pandemic. Therefore, additional updates will be provided at future Public Health & Safety Committee meetings. The Automatic License Plate Recognition system has been purchased and is now operational. Full custodial arrests on all repeat offenders is now Department policy.

Other items were discussed such as anti-theft actions. Councilmember Hurt asked if a "bait" car is being utilized. Chief Johnson noted that "bait" items are being used and a process for their use is in place.

Councilmember DeCampi asked if the Prosecuting Attorney had been directed to end plea bargaining when dealing with repeat offenders. Chief Johnson advised the Committee that this particular aspect of the strategy had been discussed and Mr. Engelmeyer was in agreement with not plea-bargaining cases involving repeat offenders. However, since the court has been limited to virtual trials due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the strategy has not been fully implemented, nor has there been an opportunity to gauge compliance with the intent of the strategy.

VII. Regional Computer Crimes Enforcement and Education Group (RCCEEG)

Chief Johnson described the Regional Computer Crimes Enforcement and Education Group (RCCEEG) as the task force that does detailed forensic investigation of electronic equipment and cell phones. The Chesterfield Police Department is a member of this organization which enables the Department to seek assistance during an investigation. Membership dues for this organization are \$9,000.00 yearly. RCCEEG has informed the Chesterfield Police Department that a member of their organization is retiring and has invited the Chesterfield Department to place an officer into the organization. Not only would RCCEEG compensate the City of Chesterfield for the officer's salary and benefits, but the annual membership fee would be waived. Chief Johnson advised the Committee that participation in RCCEEG in this manner would be beneficial to the City. He also informed the Committee that the training the officer receives during his/her tenure with the organization will enable RCCEEG to continue this extremely important service to local law enforcement. The City of Chesterfield routinely uses this service and having a Chesterfield Officer embedded in the organization would be convenient and beneficial. Councilmember Monachella motioned and Councilmember DeCampi seconded to allow the placement of an officer to the Regional Computer Crimes Enforcement and Education Group. Upon discussion, Councilmember Hurt voiced concern regarding the

length of time for the assignment and recommended that Chief Johnson consider a definitive time for the assignment. The motion carried 4-0.

VIII. Proposed Policy Revision – Street Closures for Athletic Events/Runs, etc.

Chief Johnson submitted a proposed policy revision amending the current City Policy dealing with Street Closures for Athletic and other events. Currently the policy does not allow any street closures unless the City is involved in, or sponsoring or co-sponsoring the event. The amended policy would allow exceptions to allow flexibility consistent with the City's community policing practices.

Proposed wording:

"Therefore, the City will make every effort to limit such road closures, event locations, and the duration of events, and will take other reasonable and necessary measures to avoid, or minimize, any potential negative impact to the general public. To minimize a potential negative impact, the City may deny some requests for approval of an event, or may require relocation of the route(s) or event location(s)."

This flexibility would allow subdivisions to have July 4th parades, some block parties that are held in cu-de-sacs, religious processions, etc. within reasonable limitations.

Councilmember DeCampi motioned and Councilmember Keathley seconded to recommend approval of this amended policy.

Upon discussion, subdivision indemnifications were discussed and Councilmember Hurt recommended that coordination with trustees be added to the policy.

Councilmember Hurt motioned and Councilmember DeCampi seconded to recommend approval of the amended policy with the addition of wording such as: "including coordination of any subdivision events with trustees". The motion carried 4-0.

City Administrator Geisel noted that action items from this meeting will not be included on the agenda for the March 1st Council meeting due to time and notice constraints, but they will be included on the March 15th City Council meeting agenda.

Having no further business. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 PM.