

Citizen's Focus Group Committee Meeting

Friday, July 11th, 2014

Andrea started the meeting at 9:05 AM in the Police Department Criminal Investigations Division Conference Room. Kevin passed around a sign in sheet for members to record their attendance.

Present:

Andrea Gardner – City Manager
Kevin Keller – Public Information Officer
Bob Martin – Retired City Employee
Marcie Lowery
Timothy McGinnis
Chris Mulvey
Marc Payne
Ray Torres

Absent:

Marty Smith – Vacation
Regina Vargas – Out of State
Ronnie Viss – Out of Town

Also present was Justine Mirabel (SA to City Manager) to record minutes.

I. General Announcements

Andrea announced the “BeHeardCove” website will not be continued in FY2015. She advised members of the committee to hold on to their cards advertising the site until a later time.

II. Committee Discussion & Open Forum

Discussion Items

- City Charter Amendments
 - **Andrea** advised the members of the committee of the proposed changes to the City's Charter. Kevin passed out a copy of the proposed changes to the members of the committee. Some discussion took place regarding the proposed changes as follows:

- **Section 2.07(c)** –Chris asked the question as to what guidelines the Council use for an appointed person filling a vacant position. Ray wasn't sure about the idea of Council appointing someone and suggested the first runner up be a consideration. Chris agreed with this comment. Andrea advised the appointment of a person as suggested would save the City money, as a special election would not need to be called to fill the position. Andrea advised the proposed changes are set for 2nd public hearing at the 8/5 meeting.
- **Section 4.05** – Andrea advised this was a new (proposed) section of the Charter, placing the City Secretary under the management of the City Manager. As it stands now, the City Secretary is the only department head who does not report to the City Manager. Bob added the restructuring of the management structure for this position would provide for a fair and equal evaluation for the individual serving as City Secretary.
- **Section 5.01** – Andrea explained TML has (as a part of their contract) an attorney who represents the City in matters involving our insurance.
- No further comment was made for these items. Kevin advised the Charter was available online for anyone wishing to review it on their own. Andrea encouraged members to attend the public hearing and express their thoughts.

· Blanket Deposit Program – Utilities

- **Marcie** had a question on the “Blanket Deposit” program with the Utility department. She thought it was misleading, advising when she thought of “blanket” she thought of one deposit covering all properties. Andrea explained the term and program was established some years ago at the request of some of the property owners in the City. The deposit allows for the water to automatically switch over to the property owner after the tenant moves out, preventing the water from being cut off without knowledge when the property is vacant, which would happen when tenants would vacate without notice. The owner isn't charged a reconnect fee and the property maintains water service for maintenance services. Chris asked if the deposit is reduced by the tenant not paying their water bill in full. Andrea advised this is not the case, the tenant is responsible for their own consumption and the City will collect from the tenant, not the property owner if not paid.

· Parks and Recreation Departments' Restroom Facilities

- **Andrea** addressed the topic of the restrooms maintained by PARD. Specifically, Andrea addressed the restroom at City Park Field 4 and the theft which occurred from there of the toilet paper holder and handicap rails. Andrea advised this bathroom was just renovated in May 2014 in the amount of approximately \$4800. Andrea advised she gets complaints regarding the bathrooms at the park, but the citizens are the ones messing them up. There are many complaints that PARD can't keep them clean from citizens, but it's more than likely the kids running around town not supervised destroying the bathrooms. Andrea advised this was one occurrence in a history of vandalism issues with the bathrooms. One solution is getting the bars from the jail at the old PD and locking the bathrooms at night. Ray suggested making the cleaning and upkeep of the restrooms part of the community service handed down as punishment to youth in the

community. Marcie suggested having volunteers monitor the bathrooms during the day. Other suggestions were made regarding the appearance of surveillance at the restroom facilities. Kevin advised the “cameras” would just be destroyed. Andrea advised the committee members to contribute ideas and speak with the citizens of the City regarding this issue.

- Future Meeting Location

- **Chris** suggested the idea for meetings to be held at different City facilities to tour the locations after the meetings. The rest of the members agreed with this. Andrea suggested the next meeting take place at Public Works.

- Immigrant Children

- **Tim** wanted to know if the City had any plan in place for the possibility of housing and/or educating immigrant children being brought up from the southern regions of the state. Andrea advised she has a meeting with Dr. Burns, CCISD Superintendent, and next week and will ask him about this.

- C.E.R.T. and Disaster Preparedness

- **Chris** wanted to know why Copperas Cove no longer had a CERT. Chris advised there would be a benefit to having it here again in the City rather than only in the county seat. Andrea advised there were several programs cut due to funding not being available for them. Chris was advised to contact the representatives and congressmen of the state and share his opinion. Bob commented the funding for the alert sirens are also an issue and CERT was involved in applying for those funds.
- **Chris** asked Andrea who would be willing to come and speak with various groups or citizens regarding preparedness for natural/manmade disasters. Andrea advised Chris Homeland Security would probably be the best and advised she would speak with the representative at the CTCOG next meeting.
- **Marcie** asked how citizens would know about the emergency plans/preparedness in place in the City. Andrea advised there are several classes presented at City Council Workshops regarding various preparedness topics, using the example of the storm shelters workshop item, which was presented during the 7/1 meeting. Andrea advised the problem is no one attends these workshops.
- **Ray** suggested providing the citizens with a flier with some key points of safety for a disaster. Andrea advised this was tried before with a flier in the utility bill from the City, but the citizens reported they often did not read what came in their bill. The other issue would be some citizens do not receive a paper bill, they get it electronically and would never see the fliers. Ray asked if there was a way to put information out to customers electronically. Andrea advised it was possible to send an email from the city with information and that could be an option.
- **Andrea** advised the members there is a phone alert system, FirstCall, utilized by the City for automated alerts regarding police, fire and medical emergencies. The landline phones are updated in the system automatically every quarter by CTCOG. Citizens of the City can register their cell phones if they would like to receive these alerts.

- **Bob** advised members all information regarding the Emergency Management Plan is available on the City website from a link on the Fire Department page.
- **Chris and Ray** both commented citizens just don't know where to access this information and possibly they are not exposed to it via media.
- **Ray** advised he doesn't watch TV and alerts on social media (such as Facebook) can be missed in the news feed if the last post was several hours prior. Ray suggested "boosting" the City page on Facebook.
- **Ray** advised the City needed to find a way to reach citizens of the City with vital information. Ray believes fliers would be an effective solution. Andrea advised with everyone so busy, it is hard to inform some citizens.
- **Bob** commented Code Enforcement tried fliers several years ago and it was not effective.
- **Tim** suggested an information booth at one of the larger retailers (Wal-Mart, HEB, etc.) during a payday weekend to provide the citizens with information regarding the City and resources available for preparedness. Andrea advised she and Kevin would pick a weekend and try it out.
- **Ray** suggested the members of the Citizen's Focus Group help man the booth and provide information to the citizens of the City.
- **Discussion** from several members and Andrea regarding the issue with the train tracks bisecting town, and the issue it would cause if there were to be a derailment or other incident where the roadways across the tracks were blocked.
- **Andrea** advised members of the funding for roadway projects which would assist in building overpasses in the City to prevent the derailment and/or other disaster from isolating half of the City. Andrea advised the funding is applied for every year and public comment plays a large role in deciding who gets the funds. Andrea advised members she has a difficult time getting the citizens of Copperas Cove to provide comment regarding any proposed transportation projects.
- **Tim and Ray** provided information regarding the Ft. Hood Interactive Customer Evaluation (ICE) system. The system allows for comment regarding the products and services provided on Ft Hood for soldiers and their families. Both Tim and Ray advised this system is very effective in allowing for comment as well as bringing to light issues that would otherwise not be addressed.

· Open Forum

- **Marcie** wanted to know if anyone in the group is taking the time to educate the public. Several member reported the information they learn at the meetings they are passing to those they come in contact with.
- **Marcie** advised the same people attend Council meetings and City events such as the event held to meet the Candidates. There are no new faces, suggesting a lack of interest.
- **Andrea** suggested each member be able to bring a guest to the meeting quarterly for the reason of getting more citizens involved in the community.
- **Ray** commented that everyone knows about Rabbit Fest each year, but how many are aware of the voting going on at this time. There is no "advertisement" of the event. Andrea agreed and advised Kevin to talk with Monica about advertising a reminder to vote on the EDC Billboard. Andrea also reminded members a certain amount of the

advertisement and buzz generated during an election is the responsibility of the Candidates.

- **Discussion** took place regarding making voting more appealing and/or exciting for the younger generations. Andrea advised a child 17yrs and 10mo is able to register and vote in an election. Bob suggested having the PIO for CCISD attend meetings. Andrea advised the group there is a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) consisting of Junior and Senior High School students and suggested the CFG could have a joint meeting.
- **Tim** advised every Wednesday on Ft. Hood is a new soldier meeting for which most cities send a representative to speak on the benefits of their city. Tim and Ray advised the soldiers at these meetings usually haven't decided where they are going to live yet and sending a representative might influence their decision towards Copperas Cove. Andrea advised Kevin to look into attending these meetings.
- **Marc** advised there is always a line of cars waiting to get into the transfer station on extra trash days.
- **Marc** advised there is an issue with having his broken trash can replaced by Solid Waste. Andrea advised she would look into this and to email her if there are ever any issues like this in the future.

III. Conclusion of Meeting

With no further business to discuss, Andrea concluded the meeting at 11:28 AM. Kevin advised he would email the members with the next meeting date, which will be held at Public Works. Andrea advised all members to send any questions, comments or issues via email to her or Kevin prior to the next meeting date for discussion.