

Citizen's Focus Group Committee Meeting

Friday, May 15, 2015

Andrea started the meeting at 2:10 PM in the Police Department Community Room.

Present:

Andrea Gardner – City Manager
Kevin Keller – Public Information Officer
Marcie Lowery
Chris Mulvey
Ray Torres
Marc Payne
Tim McGinnis
Marty Smith – Council Liaison
Matt Russell – Council Liaison

Absent:

Sandy Vegh – Out of Country
Ronnie Viss – Out of town

Additional Staff Present:

Tim Molnes – Chief PD
Eddie Wilson – DC Chief PD
Mike Heintzelman – DC Chief PD
Brian Wyers – Lieutenant PD

I. General Announcements

Andrea asked the group if all would agree being appointed to the group is considered a privilege. The group was in agreement. Andrea asked the group if they would agree with the statement that they are to promote the City in a positive manner and assist in dispelling any rumors, not spread negativity and repeat gossip. The group was in agreement. Andrea advised the group there was a rumor regarding the City's financials that was absolutely untrue. Andrea asked the members to remember that a rumor can destroy reputations of City staff without any truth behind the statement and to please consider that before repeating them. Andrea advised she is available to group members if they hear a rumor and need to come to her office and meet with her regarding something like that. Additionally, Andrea asked group members to dissuade citizens from spreading rumors and instead bringing them to the City Manager's office to speak with her directly regarding whatever the issue/matter at hand is.

II. Committee Discussion / Business (Open Forum)

Membership/Appointment

- Marc advised he was asked by someone after coming out of the last CFG meeting the following:
 - o What has the group accomplished?

- Marc advised he was not sure how to respond to this question since it almost seemed like the person was looking for specific items accomplished.
 - Are the members appointed for life?
 - Marc advised the appointment was up to the Council and the members serve according to the desire of the Council.
- **Marc** was also asked how the alternate members are informed of the information received at the meetings and advised they should be kept in the loop somehow. Andrea advised there are several groups with alternate members and listed several. Andrea advised these alternates are not called upon to serve unless an appointed member resigns their seat/position. These alternate members do not sit in or participate in the decision making process at any point as an alternate. Andrea added that an alternate who is interested in educating themselves on the topics of discussion for a particular group will always find a way to inform themselves. Chris asked if providing the alternates with a copy of the minutes is a way to keep them informed. Andrea advised the minutes are a part of public record and can be requested at any time.
- **Group discussion** was held regarding the topic of “what the group has accomplished”. General consensus was the knowledge gained has helped the members educate and inform the community on various topics and issues that come up in discussion. Andrea encouraged members not to be discouraged by someone who asks this question to be negative towards the group, instead invite the person to sit down and tell them of all the group has learned.

Voting

- **Matt** discussed the election held in Killeen recently and how low the voting numbers were for the election. Andrea advised Killeen is run a little differently with actual districts, but the numbers are still low because people don't get out and vote. The group agreed there isn't much advertisement of voting/elections in the area. Ray said he sees Rabbit Fest signs all over telling him when it is and how to get there but has not seen this for when and where to vote. Marc shared a story with the group regarding an increase from 90 donors without signs to over 200 donors when signs were used for a blood drive. Marty advised the City website has all the information possible someone could be looking for in the City. Matt advised most people probably don't see it. Ray advised the “younger” generation can hear about advertising on Facebook and the older generation via newspaper, but signs on the roadways would target everyone who drives that way, just like the Rabbit Fest signs.
- **Andrea, Marc and Ray** discussed banners and signs put up in other cities and why Cove does not have them. Andrea advised the sign ordinance may not allow for signs depending on where the City wanted to put them. Ray advised he has seen some towns where signs are stretched across streets and major roadways to advertise an event. General discussion was held regarding the wayfinding agreement the Chamber has with TxDOT to allow their signs in the TxDOT right-of-way.
- **Marc** advised there has to be another way to let people know when to vote and where to vote. Andrea advised the City has two (2) digital message boards that can be moved from place to place in the City. Ray reminded the group not all traffic in the City comes through town anymore now that the bypass is open. A sign would have to be placed at each end of the roadway. Marc also added that there are businesses with signs in the City that can be encouraged to advertise when elections are going on.
- **Chris** asked if CodeRed could be used for alerts during the time when the polls are open. Andrea checked and advised the system could be used for emergencies and general messaging, but cautioned against using it excessively for non-emergency alerts. Doing so could desensitize people

to paying attention to the system when an actual emergency happened. Kevin advised the amount of negative feedback from citizens for using the system in that way would be huge.

- **Andrea** advised the City used to do candidate forums several years ago. This was stopped because the City cannot use taxpayer dollars for a political activity.
- **General discussion** was held regarding a voting notice policy.

Belton Lake Level

- **Marc** asked for an update on the Belton Lake level and advised if there was going to be an update on the City's conservation level.
- **Andrea** advised the lake loses four (4) to five (5) feet of water every summer due to evaporation and use. Andrea advised the plan in place prepares the City for these summer months, which are predicted to be dry. Andrea advised during a recent meeting she attended at BCWCID #1 she learned the area needs another foot of rain accumulation between now and the end of May to avoid stage 2 water conservation efforts. Andrea advised the City will not be leaving stage 1 for a while, and the best we can hope for is to avoid having to enter stage 2. Marc asked if the lake levels and updates could be posted or advertised more frequently than they are now. Discussion was held regarding continuing education of the City's citizens regarding the water conservation efforts.

General Discussion

- **Marcie** advised travelers are stopping on the bridge on the bypass causing traffic issues and shared a story regarding a truck doing so. Marcie asked if there was a way to post no stopping on the bridge to prevent this from happening.
- **General discussion** was held regarding the Bus Hwy 190 Master Plan. Andrea advised work has progressed over 18 months on this plan and there is finally an end in sight. TxDOT is designing the first portion of the landscaped median to stretch from Constitution Drive to Dewald. Andrea advised it will be a concrete median with protected turnarounds at designated points to increase safety and ease of use. Andrea invited the members to attend the workshop on May 19th, the meeting being held for business members on June 2nd, and the public meeting scheduled for May 15th. Calendar invites will be sent to members for the last two events. Andrea advised the design will be repeated in the plan continuously reaching to FM 116. Andrea encouraged the group to positively contribute to the plan, cautioning against strongly voiced opinions and wanting too much since TxDOT is providing at no cost to the City. Tim asked how long the project would take. Andrea advised probably 12 to 18 months, unless TxDOT includes it in the road overlay they are planning.

III. Police Department Presentation – Administration and Support Services

Administration

- **Andrea** introduced Chief Molnes, DC Chief Wilson, DC Chief Heintzelman and Lt. Wyers to the group.
- **DC Wilson** began the presentation with PS Admin. The PowerPoint presentation is included (slides 1 – 6). DC Wilson advised the PD prides itself on being a partnership with the community to ensure the various goals of the department. DC Wilson reviewed the organizational chart and shared the responsibilities of the Chief of Police, DC Chief of Uniform Services and DC Chief of Support Services. At the conclusion of DC Wilson's overview, he introduced Lt. Wyers for presentation of Support Services (slides 7 – 17).

Support Services

- **Lt. Wyers** provided the Support Services general staffing make up of Criminal Investigations Division (CID), Organized Crime Unit (OCU), Community Services (to include Communications/Dispatch), Evidence and Records. Support Services is also responsible for several community programs for adults and children.
- **Lt. Wyers** advised in 2014, the PD took approximately 5100 case reports. Of that 5100, approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of them (about 3800) are turned over to CID for screening and investigation. Lt. Wyers explained the reason behind this and explained the on-call rotation and policy.
- **Lt. Wyers** advised the OCU was made up of two SGTs due to the liberty of the position. These two SGTs are assigned to a regional Task Force, giving them multijurisdictional advantage. Lt. Wyers added the overflow of odd offense cases also get assigned to OCU.
- **Andrea** asked about the recent joint venture with the DA and PD regarding crimes enticing children over the internet. Andrea asked if this type of crime is increasing in frequency in the area. Lt. Wyers advised that nine (9) people were arrested in the joint venture and when that happens criminals tend to pull back for a while. Lt. Wyers advised that no matter when or what is going on, internet usage is always monitored in the area.
- **Lt. Wyers** explained the type of system used by the PD for "covering" or "netting" an area and monitoring social media sites. Lt. Wyers explained sometimes there is too much information to be helpful depending on the search parameters used.
- **Lt. Wyers** explained the communications/dispatch office and the benefit of having a civilian supervisor to act as a liaison between dispatchers and officers. Lt. Wyers explained the scope of information dispatch provides to officers during a typical call or shift on a daily basis. Lt. Wyers added the biggest issue ever encountered by the department was/is lack of or inability for communication.
- **Lt. Wyers** advised there is one (1) evidence tech at the department. This one tech processes evidence from approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of all case reports filed in the PD. Lt. Wyers briefly explained the benefit of having the tech and the various tools/gadgets she has to use for assisting with the investigations conducted by the detectives. Lt. Wyers explained the one large benefit to having only one evidence tech is the chain of custody can't be challenged.
- **Lt. Wyers** advised there are two records clerks at the department responsible for management of all departmental records. The records department has converted into mostly digital/paperless records and no longer provides crash reports as a part of the open records system, although fulfilling ORR is a large part of the average weekly work load for the clerks. Records clerks also assist in compiling data for the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) done every year.
- **Lt. Wyers** then opened the floor up to questions for the group.
- **Marcie** asked what phone rings when the non-emergency number is called. Lt. Wyers explained the caller is routed into a queue with a recording asking them which extension or department they are looking for. Lt. Wyers explained the dispatch office has a nonemergency line as well as the 911 hub for the area. The dispatch office handles all emergency calls for police, fire and ems for the Copperas Cove area with 2 or 3 dispatchers per shift.
- **Matt** advised he is thankful the PD got rid of the smoke shack that was selling synthetic marijuana in town. Marc agreed. Lt. Wyers explained it was a multiagency effort to close the shop down. At the time the operation was going on, the state had passed a law the substance was illegal but still had no way to test for the chemical agents. The product bought from the location during the operation had to be sent to the federal lab for testing, which takes time. Chief Molnes advised the situation concerning the shop is a perfect example of how long an operation like that takes from start to finish.

- **Ray** asked if there was an advantage to keeping the 911 hub local instead of joining with the county. Both Lt. Wyers and DC Wilson explained there are definite advantages to the local dispatch to include cost and technology. Lt. Wyers advised since the hub was located in the City, the best equipment is provided to the dispatch office by the CTCOG, who handles the regional district funding distribution. Chief Molnes advised the huge benefit to having a local dispatch dealing with City police and city calls is the dispatchers know the same players (frequent involvements with PD), know the area, know the people and care about the City just as the officers do.
- **Ray** asked about drivers with DV plates parking in handicap spaces at stores and in parking lots. Ray advised it is irritating to see a car park in a handicap space only to have a young, fit kid hop out of the car and go into the store. Meanwhile there are actual disabled and handicap people who need to park in those spaces who can't. Ray wanted to know if law allows for them to park in those spaces without a handicap placard and if not do officers enforce the law. DC Wilson explained that since there is no real way to tell if the person is handicap or disabled, the officers were not going to enforce handicap violations in those cases. Chief Molnes advised that in several locations the handicap spaces are not even legally ADA compliant. The PD is unable/unwilling to enforce violations on a space that does not comply with the law. Lt. Wyers advised many times officers have to pick their battles. DC Wilson advised it isn't just DV plate holders abusing the spaces, there are times some uses a handicap placard that isn't theirs just to park closer.
- **Marty** asked if the officers had received the training on shooting dogs that has been in the news. DC Heintzelman advised the training was recently given to AC. DC Heintzelman advised the training emphasized avoiding a situation that might put an officer in a position to shoot a dog and if the situation cannot be avoided, then the officer should shoot the dog before he/she gets bitten. DC Heintzelman advised this training will soon be mandated.
- **General discussion** was held regarding open records. Marc complained he tried several times to get records from the city and was unable to do so, being advised to limit his time line, then clarify his request, then provide two pieces of information for each accident. He felt as if the City did not want to provide him with any information on the intersection he was asking for stats on. DC Wilson advised Marc could have just called and he would have provided him with that information without all that.
- **Group discussion** was held regarding the Citizen's Police Academy (CPA) and why it was not offered last year. Marcie advised it should be brought back for citizens. She and Tim agreed they learned a lot in the class regarding the PD. Andrea advised she also learned a lot, but if it comes down to a CPA or an officer keeping their job, the CPA has to go from the budget. Budget season brings difficult decisions on what stays and what goes depending on the money available. Chief Molnes advised to be fair, the PD cut the program out before taking the budget to Andrea. Andrea advised the PD has more leeway in the decision making process than some departments because the department is well run and follows the rules of budgeting.

IV. Conclusion of Meeting

DC Wilson advised the next meeting will cover Uniform Services and include a tour of the facility. The group advised they like the calendar invites they received for this series of meetings. Being no further business, Andrea adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting will be held on June 26 at 9:00 AM in the Police Department Community Room.

Citizen's Focus Group

5/15/15

Marty Smith
Marcie Hovey
Christian Mulvey
Ray Torres
Matt Russell
E.M. Payne
~~Ed~~
Tim McGinnis