



CITY COUNCIL

Public Safety Committee

Monday, August 3, 2009

5:00 p.m.

Attendance: D. Sterner, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, S. Marmarou

Other City Staff Attending: C. Hemnitz, W. Heim, S. Katzenmoyer

Dennis Sterner, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m.

I. Special Event Permits

Ms. Katzenmoyer reported on the need to review this issue. She stated that currently special events and parades are not considered separately. She also stated that special events are becoming larger and more common.

Chief Heim stated that currently, the City's ordinances do not include language to allow the City to bill organizations for services in relation to these events. He listed several examples and stated his position that this needs to be added to the ordinance.

Chief Heim stated that another concern is the ability of an organization to close off City property and to charge an admission fee. This area needs legal review.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the procedure for block parties. Chief Heim stated that 51% of residents on the block must sign a petition supporting the block party. Currently, there is a \$30 permit fee but expenses are not reimbursable.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that the sample ordinance is very extensive. Chief Heim stated his willingness to review this ordinance and adapt it to the needs of Reading.

Mr. Marmarou suggested that Chief Heim also consult with Charlie Jones as there are public works issues with these events as well.

Mr. Sterner stated his belief that parades and special events can be covered in the same ordinance but that they should be addressed separately.

Chief Heim noted other questions which need to be answered including what type of events are allowable, can events be refused, and what happens if organizations do not pay. Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that penalties need to be clarified.

Mr. Sterner questioned if Chief Heim would be willing to draft the ordinance. Chief Heim stated that he would. He will also get input from Councilor Waltman and Mr. Jones.

II. Animal Control Ordinance Amendment

This issue will be discussed at the September Public Safety Committee meeting.

III. DCR Ordinance

Mr. Marmarou stated that this ordinance is not working well with student housing. He suggested that Reading pattern their ordinance after Kutztown.

Ms. Katzenmoyer explained the level one and level two DCRs. Mr. Marmarou stated that this approach is working in Kutztown.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated her belief that these two levels were being created through the codes ticketing system. Chief Heim stated that he is not in favor of using property maintenance issues as level one DCRs. He stated his belief that property maintenance issues and police issues should be separate.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz stated that level two issues are behavioral issues. She questioned if Mr. Marmarou was okay with not issuing level one DCRs. Mr. Marmarou agreed that these issues should be separate.

Chief Heim reminded the Committee that tenants can still remain in a property throughout the appeal process. Mr. Marmarou requested that Ms. Katzenmoyer speak with Kutztown to learn their specific process and the outcome of any legal actions.

Ms. Katzenmoyer stated that Kutztown has the option of not renewing housing permits for problem properties, where Reading does not. Chief Heim questioned if repeat properties can be deemed as public nuisances and have their permits revoked or denied. Mr. Sterner requested that Ms. Katzenmoyer work with the Law Dept on these issues.

IV. Housing Permit Amendment

Ms. Hemnitz and Ms. Katzenmoyer reviewed the changes.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz requested that the language be clarified for easier understanding by citizens. Ms. Katzenmoyer will work with Ms. Mayfield to clarify the amendment.

The Committee is ready to move the amendment forward pending the clarifications.

V. Codes Ticketing System Update

Mr. Marmarou stated his belief that the system in Lancaster was implemented through a grant. Chief Heim stated that Lancaster has a business alliance that raised the funds for this project.

Mr. Waltman stated his belief that this is the correct direction for the City to move. He stated that community relations work should be done prior to implementation. He stated that communication with the residents is very important and warnings for violations as the program transitions.

Mr. Marmarou noted the need for consistent enforcement.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz suggested using a public relations approach such as that taken by the Parking Authority's commercials. She also noted the flyer distributed by the Solid Waste Department showing what is acceptable and not acceptable. She noted the need for an organized education campaign. Chief Heim stated that the media will be contacted and suggested that this program begin being discussed at neighborhood meetings.

Chief Heim stated that the first focus of the program will be on those with habitual problems.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need to reach out to the Hispanic community.

Mr. Sterner questioned when the program would be implemented. Chief Heim stated that the program cannot proceed until the software is installed by IT. He noted that this is a priority and hopes it is implemented before the end of 2009.

VI. Rental Housing Process Update

Mr. Sterner questioned if departments are sharing information. Chief Heim stated that Ms. Oehler and Ms. Overley are passionate about this issue and are working well together.

Mr. Reinhart distributed the July update.

VII. Vacant Property Registration Ordinance

Chief Heim stated that Codes cannot implement this program at this time.

The Committee requested that this be removed from the agenda until the Administration is ready to move forward.

VIII. Graffiti Update

Ms. Hemnitz stated that the most recent update has been posted on the City's website.

The Public Safety Committee meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by
Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk*

Issues for Follow-Up:

- List of property owners without rental permits – July Work Session
- Codes ticketing system ordinance - August
- Review DCR Amendment – creation of Level 1 and Level 2 DCRs – August
- Animal Control Ordinance – September
- Special Events Ordinance – September
- List of tenants and landlords receiving DCRs - September
- Enforcement of 800 foot rule for student rentals - September
- Vacant Property Registration Ordinance – January 2010
- Graffiti Enforcement – Monthly