

Submitted by Karin Groening: June 26, 2017 Police Community Meeting Notes

Councilperson Amy Brendmoen opened by mentioning the monthly police community meetings. 2nd Monday of the Month, 6:30 pm Rice St Rec Center.

She also thanked everyone who helped pull this together and get the word out.

Councilperson Dai Thao was also in attendance.

Chief Todd Axtel spoke of the importance of the engagement like we had tonight being encouraging for improvement. He compared it to the Selby-Dale area 30 year ago. Change driven by the community makes things happen.

He introduced the officers in attendance, but I missed a few. Of note, Tim Flynn is the new Central District Commander and (North Ender) Patty Lammers is new crime prevention coordinator. Also in attendance was Johnny Howard, community outreach specialist.

He brought up the 7 new beat officers, with the beat being Rice St and 3 blocks on either side, although of course if need be they can respond outside that area. The beat officers will be on duty from 7am-2am. They got funding for bikes for the beat officers.

He mentioned that much of what they do it response mode and being proactive about gang activity. Shots fired have gone up citywide by 65% in the past year. They've added 2 officers to the gang unit. He said people used to resolve disputes with fist fights, now it is gun fights.

He emphasized the need for victims, families, and neighbors to cooperate with the police to solve crime, but also if you see something brewing or see guns call it in.

From the Q&A Session (And I didn't get everything)

Question: Are the guns registered? Some are, some are stolen, some have the serial number filed off.

Question: What about issues with parole violations not being addressed. Felons having guns and the parole officer not doing anything about it. Specifically, Gabriel Robert Kimbrough. Chief Axtell said that Kimbrough is in currently in custody for the homicide on Burgess.

Comment about the need to interrupt the "no-snitch" culture.

Question: Can we get plainclothes officers on the beat? We need investigators to follow up to build cases so we get convictions. There is a shooting response team that follows up after a shooting to connect with people who might have information.

Questions: What about shot spotter? We are looking into shot spotter's effectiveness and finding mixed reviews. No decision.

Question: How can we install cameras without violating neighbors' privacy? Contact Central District Crime Prevention for Assistance.

Question: Word in the neighborhood is that we are dealing with Chicago gangs, is that the case? These are smaller gangs without the structure gangs used to have. Smaller gangs, selling drugs and settling disputes with guns.

Question: When police are in my area, how do I know it is safe to go from my car to my house? Call the non-emergency number, explain there is police activity, and you want to know if it is safe.

Chief Axtel introduced two members of the city's Ambassador's program. These are independent counselors training to work with youth. They build relationships with kids to steer them in another direction. They help kids see other options, help them get jobs, get bus tokens to get to jobs, facilitate relations between kids and police. Ambassadors work with kids through the rec centers. They connect with parents some also.

Question: How does the community connect with Ambassadors? Contact them via Central District command.

Comments: Older people need to connect with youth. Teach them how to deal with disagreements. While this should start in the home, some boys do not have men in their lives to teach them how to be men.

Question: How do we deal with problem properties. Report problem housing (side note, contact DSI if the property is not being maintained, call police if there is illegal activity).

Comment/Question about problems/trust between police and minority community due to previous incidents and national incidents. The SPPD has invested in diversity training. We have 4 community outreach specialists, officers receive CIT training (side note: Crisis Intervention Training provides techniques for dealing with those who are having a mental health crisis), de-escalation training, implicit bias training, and is working to make the PD reflective of the community.

Comment: Neighbor talked about her daughter's boyfriend being murdered during an attempted robbery last fall. When you see or hear something, please respond. Call it in. Don't ignore crime.

Comment from the police: Most shooters and victims are in the 14-27 age range. There are a variety of factors driving this.

Comment: There are training opportunities in the building trades. Steer kids towards the job corps. Trade education is 3-month training program and training is free.

Comments from Commander Tim Flynn, who has worked SWAT, gang unit, and drug unit. Talked about a pass to play program they used to have with former Viking EJ Henderson, where they got tutors to help kids pass in school and when they did they got to have a session at Winter Park. They lost funding though when EJ left.

We have the Safe Summer nights program, every Thursday in different rec centers. Free BBQ and building relationships with the community. (side note: July 6, Rice Street Rec Center and July 27: McDonough Recreation Center).

Question: What can we do? Get out in the front yard, instead of your back deck. Talk to your neighbors.

Question: What about police in the schools? We've changed to non-uniformed officers acting as mentors, talking about how police do their jobs, etc. From 50 arrests in schools last year to 5 this year.

Comment: Block clubs work. For help starting one, contact the Central District senior commander. Get to know your neighbors (side note: they say this at every police meeting).

Comment: There is a junior police academy.

Question: What about a substation on Rice? Chief Axtell said he would like to get the Central Division out of headquarters, but needs \$15 million to pay for such a move.