

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING HELD BEGINNING AT 5:32 P.M.,
DECEMBER 14, 2020, CITY HALL, TRAINING ROOMS A & B, 757 NORTH GALLOWAY
AVENUE, MESQUITE, TEXAS.**

Present: Mayor Bruce Archer and Councilmembers Robert Miklos, Dan Aleman, Tandy Boroughs, Kenny Green, B. W. Smith and Sherry Wisdom, City Manager Cliff Keheley and City Secretary Sonja Land.

I. CALL TO ORDER.

Mayor Archer called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Pro Tem Aleman provided the invocation.

II. WORK SESSION – RECEIVE UPDATE ON NEW YEAR’S EVE FIREWORKS AND GUNFIRE DEPLOYMENT.

Cliff Keheley, City Manager, stated that tonight’s update focuses on the New Year’s Eve holiday. In 2015, the City experienced a significant increase in calls regarding fireworks and gunfire use in neighborhoods on New Year’s Eve and the July 4th Holiday. As a result, the City Council requested additional enforcement with the deployment of additional resources in 2016.

Mr. Keheley stated the City has elevated educational efforts targeting the behavior of residents and focusing on the safety impacts of discharging firearms into the air. Fireworks and DWI’s have also been included in the overall safety message. Plans for 2020 include a similar public safety message including penalties for these behaviors. When citations are issued and an arrest is made, the City’s prosecutor has been directed to seek the maximum fines in all cases that are held in the City’s municipal courts. Mr. Keheley reviewed the penalties for the illegal discharge of firearms and fireworks, possession of illegal fireworks and DWI’s. Residents are encouraged to call 972.204.4888 to report illegal fireworks or gunfire. Staff will deliver educational messages by utilizing local bilingual media coverage such as television and radio, median signage and social media as well as bilingual flyers to neighborhood crime watch leaders.

Mr. Keheley stated that the City faces several challenges during deployment such as lack of information from callers. Typically, the caller cannot provide a specific address or location which makes it difficult to issue a citation or they are unwilling to leave contact information. During New Year’s Eve, most gunfire activity occurs between 12:00 a.m. and 12:15 a.m. and the ability to identify the responsible party is difficult to enforce. He explained that there is a decline in response time due to the slow citation process.

Mr. Keheley stated for 2020, 16 police officers will be assigned to a special deployment unit and will maintain certain geographic areas throughout the City. Police officers will be assigned to specific streets and neighborhoods based on historic calls. Unless a critical need occurs, police officers will remain in these geographic areas and not respond to other calls outside their assigned area. Mr. Keheley stated that fire apparatus will be present in neighborhoods when not on calls. Fire investigators will be deployed with police officers to provide additional support. Additional phone lines and staffing will be provided

Minutes of Special City Council meeting held December 14, 2020

Page 2

in a call center with the primary effort being to obtain an address of the location and the type of incident occurring. Police officers will visit each address where gunfire is reported. Police officers will confiscate fireworks, record basic information and return within three days to issue citations.

Mr. Smith suggested a pilot program to monitor fireworks stands outside of the City limits in order to confiscate fireworks as they enter the City limits. Mr. Keheley stated that staff will research this option.

Chief Cato stated that 30 police officers will be on patrol on New Year's Eve in addition to the 16 police officers who are assigned to the special deployment unit.

Mayor Archer suggested a safe zone, with oversight by the Fire Department, for residents to launch fireworks. Councilmember Wisdom suggested residents sign a waiver to participate in the safe zone.

Mr. Green suggested an unused police car with lights flashing be utilized at the City limits with signage that fireworks are prohibited and yard signs for residents to place in their yards that fireworks are illegal. Mr. Green suggested that staff reach out to local apartment complexes to notify and remind their residents of illegal fireworks and gunfire.

Mr. Keheley confirmed that residents will be arrested if caught shooting a gun and the gun will be obtained as evidence and residents will be cited for shooting fireworks and that the fireworks will be confiscated.

Mr. Miklos suggested a significant increase in Police Department staff from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. and to assign more than 16 police officers to the special deployment on New Year's Eve.

Mr. Keheley stated that the deployment units will be visible in the neighborhoods and confirmed that the Police Chief, Assistant Police Chiefs and Police Captains will be involved. Mr. Keheley reminded Council to request that residents submit addresses when reporting illegal fireworks and gunfire.

Council directed staff to have as many police officers as possible assigned to the special deployment unit on New Year's Eve to reduce the discharge of gunfire and fireworks and to arrest the perpetrator discharging firearms, confiscate the fireworks and issue citations to the offenders.

III. EXECUTIVE SESSION – PERSONNEL MATTERS – 7:15 P.M.

Mayor Archer announced that the City Council would meet in Executive Session pursuant to Section 551.074 of the Texas Government Code to consider the appointment, evaluation, employment, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of the City Manager, City Attorney, Municipal Court Judge, City Secretary, members of the various City boards and commissions, and City officers or other City employees (Annual review of the City Manager and City Attorney); whereupon, the City Council proceeded to meet in the

Minutes of Special City Council meeting held December 14, 2020

Page 3

Executive Conference Room. After the closed meeting ended at 10:30 p.m., the City Council reconvened in Open Session.

No executive action was necessary.

IV. ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. Miklos moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. Smith and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Sonja Land
City Secretary

Bruce Archer
Mayor