



City of Mesquite, Texas

Minutes - Final City Council

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

6:00 PM

City Hall | Council Chamber
757 N. Galloway | Mesquite, Texas

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING - CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER - 6:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

OTHER BUSINESS

1

Discuss strategies for addressing crime in Mesquite.

Mayor Bruce Archer called the meeting to order and stated that the City of Mesquite is taking an aggressive stand on crime with a greater police presence and proactive officer involvement in neighborhoods and commercial development.

City Manager Cliff Keheley stated that Police Chief Charles Cato will present proposed tactics and techniques, suggested by the Mesquite Police Department (MPD), to reduce, address and solve criminal activity in our community. The presentation is a direct outcome of the Special City Council meeting held on December 17, 2019, regarding crime, and the input received from the public, along with input from the MPD staff and the City's executive team after many meetings and discussions. Over the next few months, these new approaches to crime fighting in our community will take some time to effectively and efficiently implement. Most processes are anticipated to be in place no later than the first City Council meeting in April 2020. Active and consistent involvement from the citizens is also needed to help fight crime. Mr. Keheley encouraged citizens to attend the annual Neighborhood Summit on Saturday, February 22, 2020, at the Mesquite Independent School District's Professional Development Center, 3819 Towne Crossing Boulevard. This summit is an opportunity for every resident to learn more about our community and the resources that are available to be more involved in improving the conditions of our neighborhoods.

Chief Cato stated that the MPD subscribes to the Routine Activities theory of crime. Crime is a result of three things: (1) motivated offender, (2) a suitable target – individual or place/location and (3) opportunity of committing a crime. Chief Cato stated that MPD staff will present strategies regarding convenience stores and late hour businesses, apartment complexes, police presence in neighborhoods and crime prevention.

Captain Doug Yates stated that a convenience store is a business establishment that offers the sale of basic food, household and pharmaceutical items. A late-hour business is any business that is open after 10:00 p.m., has a building size smaller than 2,000 square feet and a point of sale cash register. Convenience store and late-hour store robberies have been consistent over the past three years, accounting for 20 percent of all robberies. Ninety-two percent of convenience store robberies in 2019 were aggravated offenses. Nationally,

convenience store employees are second only to taxicab drivers for workplace homicide.

Captain Yates presented a two-tier approach to make our community safer by partnering with business owners: Tier 1- surveillance and line of sight requirements and Tier 2- late hour activity requirements. Tier 1 conditions includes all convenience stores and late-hour businesses registering with the MPD. Registration is free and it provides MPD contact information for the business. MPD will provide educational materials and a registration decal to be displayed at the business. Once registered, the businesses would be required to comply with minimum camera requirements such as four color cameras with a 1080 resolution, 24 hours of continuous monitoring, maintain video for 10 days, maintain an accurate time clock, capture angles, provide access to video within two hours on site and provide digital-to-digital storage and passwords. The cost to property owners would be \$500-\$1,000. Tier 1 sight requirements includes having a clear line-of-sight to the on-duty clerk station from the front of the business. A clear line-of-sight consists of no covering or blockage from three feet from the floor to six feet from the floor. Tier 2 applies when businesses remain open after 10:00 p.m. Tier 2 must meet Tier 1 requirements, maintain two or more employees/clerks while the business is open after 10:00 p.m. or have a controlled access window and maintain one covert theft detection device on the property designed to notify police when it is taken in an offense or have a silent robbery alarm system approved by the MPD. Captain Yates stated that City cost consists of less than \$2,000 annually for the purchase of decals and training materials. The expectation is City-wide compliance in six months, with an impact on robbery reductions and an increased arrest rate.

Lieutenant Paul Zanolini stated that there are 63 apartment complexes located in the City of Mesquite which contain 27 percent of the total residential units and 24 percent of the total population. The MPD responds to approximately 30 calls per day at apartment complexes with aggravated assaults and robberies being the most common violent crime offenses. The MPD utilizes the S.A.F.E. program, which is a voluntary partnership between the MPD and apartment complexes and focuses on communication and accountability. Through the S.A.F.E. program, the MPD provides the apartment complex with reports regarding crimes committed in each complex, offers a Criminal Trespass affidavit, offers a lease addendum that notifies applicants and renewals that the complex works with the MPD to address crime and the MPD facilitates the S.A.F.E. program process by providing a direct point of access for the complex to contact the MPD with problems. The S.A.F.E. program helps to identify problem tenants, criminal element, lease violations/evictions and provides a safer community.

Lieutenant Zanolini stated that the following issues are weakness points in common areas of apartment complexes: stairwells, walking paths, landscaping, amenities and building/apartment numbers. The MPD's proposed recommendations to address the common areas are to increase the lighting requirements, install quality video surveillance/monitoring, reduce hiding areas and tree overhang, install keyed access and self-closing doors for gyms and swimming pools and to install building signage with building numbers and apartment numbers to increase visibility. Lieutenant Zanolini stated that the following issues are weakness points in parking areas of apartment complexes: unrestricted access, points of entry/exit and lack of guardianship. The MPD's proposed recommendations to address the parking areas are to regulate/monitor/enforce access rules, create no parking zones on City streets,

increase lighting requirements, require quality video surveillance/monitoring and full-time security/part-time courtesy officer. Lieutenant Zanolini stated that the following issues are weakness points in the apartment community itself: lack of awareness, community engagement, crime and reluctance to respond. The MPD's proposed recommendations to address the apartment community is to have annual apartment manager meetings with City staff, apartment hosted community meetings/events for residents, encourage volunteer participation for S.A.F.E. Program and the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) recommendations and to compel compliance through fines or fees. Lieutenant Zanolini stated that the MPD recommends developing an ordinance to address the basic apartment regulations: (1) increase lighting requirements, (2) improve building/unit identification signage, (3) video surveillance/monitoring, (4) keyed access to amenities and (5) positive marketing program for safest properties as well as the enhanced regulations for those with crime issues by requiring (1) CPTED assessment/compliance, (2) 24-hour security personnel, (3) quarterly meetings with City staff, (4) community meetings with residents and (5) apartment fee schedule for administering the program.

Mr. Boroughs requested that hotels and motels be included with the proposed ordinance for apartment complexes.

Ms. Wisdom requested that residential rentals be included in the apartment regulations.

Mr. Green requested that the MPD require apartment complexes to update their contact information with the MPD biannually.

Mayor Archer requested that churches become involved with apartment complexes through the Mesquite Ministerial Alliance.

Captain David Gill stated that a Kansas City study of crime determined that police officers randomly driving through a neighborhood does not reduce crime. The Australian Journal of Forensic Sciences produced a study in 2019 that stated a police officer remaining in one space for 13 minutes can significantly reduce crime, which is called the 13-minute patrol (13M). Hot spots and problems across the city will be targeted by utilizing 13M. The MPD 13M preventative patrol recommendations include developing a real-time beat and shift-specific hotspot mapping, and instructing police officers to be visible in the hotspots in their area at any time during their shift.

Mr. Green requested the City Council district hotspot maps be provided to Councilmembers.

Lieutenant Stephen Biggs introduced the Crime Prevention/Community Policing unit officers. The MPD has a strong partnership with the Mesquite Independent School District (MISD) through the School Resource Officer (SRO) Program, Law Enforcement Teaching Students (LETS) Program and the Read Play Talk initiative. Community policing also includes Santa Cop, Police Explorers, career days, Student Government Days, High School Law Enforcement Practicum Program, Summer College Internship Program, summer camps and the High School Mentorship Program. Starting at the beginning of the 2019 school year, MPD initiated a program which assigned a police officer to each MISD elementary school as a liaison. These officers stop by the school on a weekly basis to visit with the staff, read to children and make themselves available for

any needs the school may have. The MPD recently began the 20-4-7 Program, which asks residents to spend 20 minutes outside, four days out of a seven-day week. Project Porch Light encourages the use of exterior lights and engaging neighbors. The CPTED security surveys allow a Certified Crime Prevention Specialist to complete a CPTED survey of a business at no charge and make recommendations for improvements. The Safe Exchange Zone is a designated area under 24-hour video surveillance in front of the MPD building which allows residents to complete safe face-to-face business transactions. The Lock, Take, Hide Program is used to spread awareness throughout neighborhoods and retail areas for residents to lock their cars, take their keys and hide their belongings. The MPD provides free literature and signage in English and Spanish to businesses in retail areas and replacement of older signage. The Neighborhood Watch Program focuses on being neighborly, provides training to residents on how to protect themselves and their neighbors and creates a sense of pride. The award-winning Citizens Police Academy (CPA) has over 270 dues-paying members. The MPD has plans to start a CPA for Spanish-speaking residents called "Unidos" later this year. Lieutenant Biggs stated that in 2020, the MPD will implement a Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) class, which will be free to any citizen or business owner in the City. The CRASE class will provide strategies, guidance and a proven plan for surviving an active shooter event. The Stop the Bleed course will provide citizens the ability to recognize life-threatening bleeding and intervene effectively. Lieutenant Biggs reviewed the crime prevention resources that are available online such as police districts, crime map, 24-hour call archive, serial number central and the MPD Jail list.

Councilmembers expressed appreciation to the MPD for their presentations.

A brief recess was taken at 8:04 p.m. The meeting resumed at 8:15 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

2

Conduct a public hearing and first reading for an ordinance imposing a moratorium on applications and plans for development, for permits, plats, verifications, rezoning and site plans for convenience stores within the corporate limits of the City of Mesquite, adopting written findings justifying the moratorium, providing for waivers and limited exceptions to the moratorium and establishing an expiration date.

A public hearing was held to consider a moratorium on applications and plans for development, for permits, plats, verifications, rezoning and site plans for convenience stores within the corporate limits of the City of Mesquite, adopting written findings justifying the moratorium, providing for waivers and limited exceptions to the moratorium and establishing an expiration date.

Jeff Armstrong, Director of Planning and Development Services, stated that this is the second of three public hearings. The first public hearing was held at the January 27, 2020, Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. The third public hearing will be held at the regular City Council meeting on February 3, 2020. The intent of the moratorium is not to ban convenience stores but to press pause on new development to allow the City Council time to consider regulations to make convenience stores safer and reduce the impact they have on nearby neighborhoods.

The following persons spoke in opposition to the proposed moratorium: (1) Terry

Knudson, 323 Running Brook Lane and (2) Steve Brown, 1270 North Belt Line Road.

The following persons spoke in favor of the proposed moratorium: (1) Holly Fisk, 4200 Woodbluff Drive and (2) J. R. Black, 1739 Roundrock Trail.

Millie Arnold, 2206 Luau Drive, spoke in support of reporting incidents to the Police Department.

Mr. Miklos moved to approve AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MESQUITE, TEXAS, IMPOSING A MORATORIUM ON APPLICATIONS AND PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT FOR PERMITS, PLATS, VERIFICATIONS, REZONINGS AND SITE PLANS FOR CONVENIENCE STORES WITHIN THE CORPORATE CITY LIMITS OF MESQUITE; ADOPTING WRITTEN FINDINGS JUSTIFYING THE MORATORIUM; PROVIDING FOR WAIVERS AND LIMITED EXCEPTIONS TO THE MORATORIUM; AND ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE DATE. Motion was seconded by Mr. Green and approved unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

1. Kirk Boxdorfer, 2304 Lesley Lane, expressed support for the Council's action.
2. Rickie Brown, 4505 Harper Drive, expressed concerns in his neighborhood.
3. Janet Adams, 529 Oxbow, requested information regarding the Mesquite Rotary Club.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Green moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion was seconded by Mr. Boroughs and approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:22 p.m.

Attest:

Approved:

Sonja Land, City Secretary

Bruce Archer, Mayor