

***Proceedings of the Council of the City of Joliet, Illinois
held on the 26th day of October, A.D. 2009***

SPECIAL MEETING of the Council of the City of Joliet, Illinois held on Monday, October 26, 2009 at 4:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers, Joliet Municipal Building, 150 W. Jefferson Street, Joliet, Illinois called for the following purpose:

- 1) Joliet Police Department Response to Recent Criminal Activity

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: MAYOR ARTHUR SCHULTZ and DISTRICT 4 COUNCILWOMAN SUSIE A. BARBER, DISTRICT 2 COUNCILMAN TIMOTHY M. BROPHY, DISTRICT 5 COUNCILMAN WARREN C. DORRIS, COUNCILMAN AT LARGE THOMAS C. GIARRANTE, COUNCILWOMAN AT LARGE JAN QUILLMAN, DISTRICT 1 COUNCILMAN JOSEPH R. SHETINA and DISTRICT 3 COUNCILMAN ANTHONY UREMOVIC.

ABSENT: COUNCILMAN AT LARGE MICHAEL F. TURK.

ALSO PRESENT: CITY MANAGER THOMAS A. THANAS and CORPORATION COUNSEL JEFFREY S. PLYMAN.

MAYOR SCHULTZ asked Police Chief Fred Hayes to respond to the recent publicity regarding criminal activity in Joliet.

Chief Hayes said he has a short presentation to give everyone an idea of what the Police Department has been doing and how they have been investigating several recent incidents, particularly some of the home invasions in the Reedwood and St. Pat's neighborhoods. He said he will also respond to some of the recent violent crimes that have occurred this summer in the City of Joliet.

Chief Hayes proceeded with his PowerPoint presentation and said the City has actually continued to see a decrease in the overall crime rate and there has been about a 52% decrease over the last 10 years. He said this is significant when it is compared to the nationwide decrease of 12.6% and the statewide decrease of 22.8%.

Chief Hayes said there has been a decrease in the overall violent crime rate by 54% over the last 10 years. He said in 2005 it was probably about the lowest plateau that we've had in the City, there was an increase in 2006 that continued in 2007, in 2008 it dropped, and now in 2009 it is increasing, so the overall decrease is starting to increase and we have tried to focus on it. He said in dealing with violent crime, that focus really has been on gangs, guns and drugs. He said the 54% reduction is important because nationwide it was reduced by 10% and statewide it was reduced by 22%. He said we've done outstanding work here to be able to reduce our overall crime rate and the violent crime rate which is something we really want to pay attention to.

Chief Hayes said the violent crime rate trend has gone up and there are some significant increases in some categories that we watch on a regular basis, one of them being the homicide rate. He said we've seen that the overall violent crimes related to firearms have increased about 17% this year. He said it's hard to say

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if that will remain going out to the completion of the year with a decrease in October and a little decrease in September, but August certainly was a very troubling month for the City with 5 homicides. He said there have been 182 firearm related shooting incidents in comparison to 155 incidents at this time last year.

Chief Hayes said regarding the homicide rate, we're at 10 so far this year, and last year we completed the year with only 5. He said in previous years we've had significantly higher rates, some as high as 23 and 24 going back to the early 1990s, but even in recent times, there were 13 in 2005 and 14 in 2006, so that's something we like to watch very closely and respond.

Chief Hayes said the department meets every Friday afternoon and using CompStat (computer statistics) maps, they review all of the incidents of reported crimes in the City and respond to the emerging hot spots by deploying additional police resources to those areas. He said with all of the shooting incidents occurring in the City, there's a myth that they occur on the east side of Joliet when in fact they actually occur City-wide and he showed a map of all gun violence crime locations in 2009. He said the map shows that there are pockets of higher shooting incidences, but it's pretty spread out and not just concentrated on the east side. He said it's something we've recognized for the past five years and it's important for the community to understand that this is a City-wide problem and not concentrated on one side of town.

Chief Hayes said besides our strategic tactical deployment for gang violence suppression patrols, we also have the narcotics unit focusing on street level narcotics in violent crime areas. He said we recently completed an operation in the St. Pat's and Cathedral neighborhoods and were able to make over 29 cases against drug defendants in those locations. He said there is also a federal initiative called Project Safe Neighborhood where we concentrate on hard core gangbangers who have recently been released from prison and are continuing to commit crimes, and when we make new cases on those individuals, we defer those prosecutions for federal prosecution because they receive significantly more time federally than they do on a state level.

Chief Hayes said we have also worked very hard over the last two years on community collaboration and we have a renewed focus on meeting with different community groups and holding neighborhood meetings to try and develop partnerships with the community. He said one of the most effective strategies we could utilize is to continue to have that strong community focus out there.

Chief Hayes said recently we've seen an increase of home invasions in the Reedwood area and this pattern developed first on April 1, 2009 in the 300 block of S. Park Drive where a 62 year old victim was sexually assaulted in her home, and after that we had two other cases, one that occurred in August and one that occurred in October. He said the victim from S. Park was able to identify her attacker and we've made an arrest on that case.

Chief Hayes said based on the fact that all three of these cases occurred in close proximity to each other, we put out a community crime alert. He said we can't say that the offender in the first case was the one on the other two and we are working hard on that. He said we notified several homeowners groups of the crime pattern and also used the reverse 911 system to alert all the neighbors to be on the lookout there.

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Chief Hayes said we came up with some crime prevention tips encouraging people to be vigilant, to keep their doors and windows locked and to report any kind of suspicious activity to the Police Department. He also suggested that residents keep their phones handy and take their cordless phone with them when there is a knock on the door.

COUNCILMAN TURK arrived at the meeting at this point.

Chief Hayes showed statistics on reported crimes in the St. Pat's area and Reedwood area, both of which showed a decrease in crime. He said the Police Department has recently attended neighborhood meetings in these areas to let the residents know what's occurring in their neighborhoods.

Chief Hayes said overall City-wide we're seeing some increase in crime particularly in burglary and theft and we feel that's indicative of what is happening nationwide when there is increased unemployment and an economic downturn. He said those all play a factor in increasing crime rates, and because of those burglary and theft increases, we'll see an overall increase of crime in Joliet by the end of this year.

Chief Hayes said in response to those home invasions, we've put out a specialized burglary task force in the area that has been successful. He said we don't want the residents to let their guard down, we want them to be vigilant, we want them to call us, and we saw an increase in reports to the police in the St. Pat's area about suspicious individuals so our message is getting out there. He said together that will make a difference.

COUNCILWOMAN QUILLMAN said she was at several of these neighborhood meetings and she heard time and time again, know your neighbors, get to know who should be in the neighborhoods, and she has heard the Police Chief say at every meeting to call 911 if something doesn't look or feel right, but people are still hesitant to do so. She said people should call 911 and they can do that anonymously and the more meetings the Police Department has, the better to get this information out. She said she wanted to commend the Police Department on the excellent job that they have been doing.

Chief Hayes said it is important to get that message out and often we'll find cases where people have seen suspicious activity but didn't feel it was important to call or didn't want to bother the police if they were to call, and he tells them we have an extremely well trained superior police force out there that are ready to respond and we want to hear from the community.

COUNCILMAN BROPHY said he thinks the success we've had lately in reducing our crime rate is because of a couple of things – our investment in good cops, our investment in some programs like SAFE schools and the NOP program, and the stability of the force. He said local leadership and a good core of people has yielded results and he doesn't want to discount that, because he thinks it's important that the Chief has been here and cares about the place and the people around the Chief do too.

COUNCILMAN BROPHY asked if the Police Department had any statistics on where the offenders come from. He said we record locations of incidents, but do we know where the offenders are coming from. He asked if we can record that.

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Chief Hayes said we do record that and track it. He said we haven't really come up with a statistical analysis of offenders and locations, but we certainly can do that. He said we often see offenders come from outside the area and he doesn't have the statistical figure on how many of the offenders are from outside of Joliet and how many are from inside, but outside areas have contributed to it. He said we have seen recent displacement of people from other areas such as Chicago and residents of that area have moved to our location, but we still have a pretty well entrenched local crime problem.

COUNCILMAN BROPHY asked if it is worth noting the type of environment offenders live in besides where the crimes are occurring or the types of housing in which they live.

Chief Hayes said it is worth noting; some of the things that we look at are contributing factors to crime and we have to track all of those things because that comes into play when looking at the demographics of an area. He said income levels and unemployment rates are all contributing factors that we watch very closely.

COUNCILMAN BROPHY said regarding the hard core repeaters, we have a system in our country that registers sex offenders, do we have such a system for repeaters for significant crimes.

Chief Hayes said that would require some legislation and there's some constitutional issues that would be involved.

COUNCILMAN BROPHY said he appreciates the emails he and the other Council members receive from the Police Department when something occurs in town, and he asked if we can extend that service to others in town such as homeowner association officers and volunteers in the event that the department was looking for something specific.

Chief Hayes said we are exploring several possibilities to accomplish that and we recognize that would be extremely beneficial if we were able to do that. He said we've been looking at several vendors for a community alert system where residents would register and receive information. He said we hope to try and narrow that down to a vendor very shortly and recently found a vendor that would probably have a neutral cost to the City to implement that project.

Chief Hayes said we also think it's very beneficial to try and empower our residents by giving them the ability to actually look at what is occurring in their neighborhoods, so we're looking at a project that we would hope to get off the ground in the next 60 days. He said their department would provide crime information to a website called CrimeReports.com and residents could pull up their neighborhood and see what has occurred there. He said right now we list crime on our website so residents have access to that, but it's an annual report and it's a little dated. He said we would prefer to get something out in a more rapid fashion so residents can be informed of what's going on in their neighborhoods.

COUNCILWOMAN QUILLMAN asked if there are any grant funds available for these types of programs.

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Chief Hayes said we have tried to apply for grants for these programs and were even working to do that internally without contacting an outside vendor, and there's a way to do it internally, but the price that CrimeReports.com charges a city of our size is well worth it. He said we're looking at around \$1,000 a year.

COUNCILMAN DORRIS said years ago we knew exactly where the hot spots were and were able to concentrate on those spots. He said a lot of those spots have been cleaned up because we reduced the density, put homeowners in place and started developing neighborhood associations, and it really worked. He said one of the components of that was the gun turn-in and he asked if we can get a company like Wal-Mart to sponsor it. He said one of the issues we have in the City is guns being readily available and people are picking them up for \$40 and \$50 and sometimes those guns are just passed on and if we can get them off the street, it would really help.

Chief Hayes said that is a very valuable program and we did a gun buyback program last summer in conjunction with Will County Crime Stoppers. He said about 140 weapons were turned into the City then but we didn't do one this year, and that's something we need to look at.

COUNCILMAN GIARRANTE said he knows the Police Department is 30 officers short because of the budget restraints, but he wants to commend the Police Chief and the officers for the great job that they do. He said he has always felt if you want good employees you have to pay them well, and he thinks it shows. He said he very seldom gets a complaint about the department and he told the Chief to keep up the good work.

Chief Hayes said the Joliet Police Department is one of the superior police forces in this nation, and that couldn't have been accomplished without the Mayor and Council's support and giving the City a department that is extremely well trained and very well equipped. He said they can get the job done, and he could ask for a troop surge, but he understands they are responding to an economic decline in the City. He said the Police Department has rolled up its sleeves and has pledged to work harder and smarter and they'll get the job done thanks to the Mayor and Council's support.

COUNCILMAN TURK said people still need to keep their guard up and the Chief gave out some excellent tips today. He said he would just like to commend the Chief and the department.

COUNCILWOMAN QUILLMAN asked about the crime report program and which would be quicker, to try and do it internally or to farm it out at the \$1,000 cost.

Chief Hayes said it's probably quicker to do it with a vendor and the vendor said they could make it happen within about 60 days.

COUNCILWOMAN QUILLMAN said she would like to make a motion to approve the monies for this program so we can get it up and running so the neighborhoods can help the Police Department and be its eyes and ears.

The Corporation Counsel said technically that can not be done at this meeting under the Open Meetings Act.

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Chief Hayes said he would get something to the Public Safety Committee as soon as possible.

COUNCILWOMAN BARBER told Chief Hayes if she can do anything to assist him, don't hesitate to ask because he is doing a fabulous job.

Chief Hayes said he appreciates her support and the men and women of the department are going to continue to work very hard.

MAYOR SCHULTZ congratulated the Police Department for a job well done and he thanked the Chief for bringing this information to the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

COUNCILMAN DORRIS moved that the Council adjourn at 4:45 p.m.

Motion seconded by COUNCILMAN GIARRANTE.

Motion carried by the following vote:

AYES: COUNCILWOMAN BARBER, COUNCILMEN BROPHY, GIARRANTE,
COUNCILWOMAN QUILLMAN, COUNCILMEN SHETINA, TURK,
UREMOVIC and MAYOR SCHULTZ.

NAYS: NONE.

ARTHUR SCHULTZ
Mayor

JANET K. TRAVEN
City Clerk

Recorded on Tape