

SAFETY COMMITTEE

November 3, 2009

3:30 P.M.

Councilwoman Ladd, Chairman, called the meeting of the Safety Committee to order with Councilmen Benson, Berz, Scott, Rico, McGary, Gilbert, Robinson and Murphy present. Attorneys Michael McMahan and Valerie Malueg and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Jim Templeton, Dennis Malone, Dan Johnson, Lee Norris, Beverly Johnson, Paul Page, Vickie Haley, Daisy Madison, Richard Beeland, Matt Lea, Fredia Kitchen, Tony Sammons, Simone White, Chief Cooper, Chief Parker, Chief Dodd, Beverly Cosley, Steve Leach, Gary Hilbert, Dickie Hutsell, Solomon Hatch, Greg Haynes, John VanWinkle, Chief Snyder, Bill Payne, Officer Kennedy and Jerry Stewart.

NAACP CONCERNS WITH POLICE DEPARTMENT COMMUNICATION

Chairman Ladd introduced Valoria Armstrong, President of the NAACP, who was present to share community input. Ms. Armstrong read from a prepared statement, which is made a part of this minute material and expressed the general perceptions of inquiries from the community regarding the fatal shooting of Alonzo O'Kelley, Jr. and Alonzo Heyward and police activity and the general perception of fear and racial profiling. In conclusion, she asked that two City Council Representatives be appointed to a Blue Ribbon Committee to examine the issues of Racial Profiling, Excessive Use of Force, and lack of Racial Diversity in the Police Dept. Councilmen McGary and Gilbert volunteered. Upon questioning by Councilman Benson as to the purpose of this committee, Ms. Armstrong responded that they wanted the Police Dept. to be more open.

Chief Cooper presented a handout of Violent Crime in Chattanooga in 2009, which is also made a part of this minute material. He stated that perceptions can be misinformative and that the Police Dept. does not deal in perceptions but in facts. He further stated that he had not been asked to meet with the NAACP and that while they applaud the efforts of the NAACP, the focus should not be on the Police Dept. but the need is to get communities and families involved. Upon questioning, he stated that the two shootings mentioned were still open and under investigation.

Councilman Benson noted that the figures presented were tragic and that he agreed with Chief Cooper concerning parenting. Councilman Murphy also found the raw data to be sobering and troubling and questioned if more could be done such as door-to-door efforts in communities so that the Police can get to know the neighborhood on a personal level. Chief Cooper stated that going door-to-door was not the solution—that they did not have this ability and it was not their role. He mentioned National Night Out.

Councilman Gilbert added that African-Americans fear the police, with Chief Cooper disputing this. Councilman Gilbert asked for better communication, stating that he was talking about young people. Chief Cooper noted his 28 years of service; that those committing crimes fear the police, noting that there had not been one complaint of racial profiling and that policemen are terminated for wrong doing.

Councilwoman Robinson suggested finding a solution by the NAACP going into the communities and establishing outreach; that 90% of the crimes were being committed by 10% of the people and these 10% could be worked with in order to empower them; that they were probably known by name. Ms. Armstrong responded that they were an advocacy organization; that Chief Cooper claimed no ownership as it related to perception. Councilwoman Robinson disagreed and Chairman Ladd asked that everyone refrain from such statements.

Councilwoman Scott noted that the Police Dept. had helped get Neighborhood Watch going in her area of Hill City. She suggested that young troublemakers have the opportunity for community service and the opportunity to model after some supportive adult. Chief Cooper stated that the best model and judge for young people are their parents, and the change had to come from within the home; that Ms. Scott's suggestion would be great if it could happen.

Chairman Ladd stated that the discussion had been good; that there was no easy solution; that she wished them well with the Blue Ribbon Committee and that we had two volunteers.

On motion of Councilman Murphy, seconded by Councilman Gilbert, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved as published.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.