

SAFETY COMMITTEE

July 6, 2010

3:45 P.M.

Councilman Benson, Chairman, called the meeting of the Safety Committee to order with Councilpersons Ladd, Rico, Gilbert, Scott, Murphy, Berz, Robinson and McGary present. City Attorney Michael McMahan and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Daisy Madison, Ulystein Oates, Vickie Haley, Fredia Kitchen, Dickie Hutsell, Barry Bennett, Dan Johnson, Richard Beeland, Officer Craig, Chief Parker, Officer Kennedy, Greta Hayes, Larry Zehnder, Jerry Stewart, Joachim Volz, Jim Templeton, Steve Leach, Chief Dodd, Chief Williams, Mark Keil, Bill Payne, Mayor Littlefield, Lt. Carroll, John Van Winkle and Greg Haynes.

Chairman Benson stated that each Councilmember had had an opportunity for questions and that Chief Dodd had read them; that he would ask Chief Dodd to give answers to the questions that he had received; that he would like for the Council to show unity and support. He asked Chief Dodd to answer the questions as submitted.

Chief Dodd noted that the first question had to do with his style of leadership. He stated that the Police Dept. was an organic unit where types of management is different—that a leader needs to be fluid; that he was more of a counselor-coach facilitator; that he did not micro-manage and held his people accountable; that he thought it important to pick the right people and give them the authority to do their job in order for things to move efficiently.

The second question revolved around Chief Dodd being a City resident and response time. Chief Dodd stated that he did not plan to move unless it was a requirement; that he had lived at his present home for 16 years and had raised a family there and his church was there; that he did not feel his job had ever suffered from where he lived; that certainly if it were required, he would make this possible.

At this point, Mayor Littlefield stated that it was his preference that a person be from the City if possible; however for a number of years it had not been a requirement for a number of people who had lived outside the city; that his preference would be in the City, but he did not make it a requirement of office; that it would be unreasonable to ask Chief Dodd to move into the City; that the next Mayor could appoint someone else; that Chief Dodd had lived here 16 years, and it would be unreasonable to ask him to move for what could be a short term assignment; that he did not make this a requirement, and it was not an issue to get hung up on.

Councilman McGary asked Mayor Littlefield if he signed an Executive Order for new employees and was told “yes”. He asked how this would affect the position on police cars? Chief Dodd stated that there could be some animosity in the department; that it would not hurt him personally; that it only took him 20 minutes, but he would have to go to the Police Dept. first to get a city car—that this would mean about 30 minutes or an hour for him personally; however for the average officer, their car is their office.

Councilman Benson noted that the Council was coming to a conclusion; that they were talking about a user fee.

Councilman McGary again asked Chief Dodd if this would affect his effectiveness? Chief Dodd agreed that it would be a hindrance; however he explained that he was not the first responder.

Mayor Littlefield added that officers would have to move what was in their car; that they would be allowed to keep this privilege but would pay for it.

The third question posed to Chief Dodd was how would he approach the validity of Employee Evaluations? He explained that over the last 10-15 years they had changed the Evaluation Process and had gone to semi-annual—that it was “Halo versus Horns”; that if you went below a “3”, it had to be justified; that he had not met a perfect system; that a one page evaluation was simpler and Personnel had accepted this as being more accurate, timely and objective; that it may not be perfect; that you might have an outstanding officer in April and the rest of the year he or she might do something bad and have to be terminated—that we are all human and make mistakes, and some mistakes can’t be overcome; that the last thing he wanted was to train someone and then be scrutinized for firing them—that the last thing he wanted to do was to terminate someone.

Councilman Benson noted that the Council was put in a terrible spot at times, mentioning where an officer was said to be a “real jerk”, which should have been documented; that things like this put the Council in a spot at times.

Councilman McGary asked Chief Dodd if Chattanooga had a gang problem, and he responded “absolutely”. Councilman McGary asked what he would do about this as Chief. Chief Dodd responded that the best tool is the “Crime Suppression Unit”—that it allowed us to keep up with gang members and to know what is going to happen before it happens; that he had talked to the Sheriff, and they will give us five additional officers, which will “beef” us up to 15; that there were some things he would like to discuss with his immediate Staff; that he did have some changes in mind.

Councilman McGary continued. He asked Chief Dodd about his views on consolidation? Chief Dodd responded getting an unbiased outside opinion—that we overlap daily; that both SWAT Teams work together, and they could “mesh” immediately; that he had not thought complete consolidation through down the road yet.

Councilman Gilbert asked him about sensitivity in the department? Chief Dodd responded that gangs and gun violence were his big considerations, but he was also concerned about manpower, personnel and diversity in the department; that it is presently 15% African-American, which does not cut it—that we need to double this. He mentioned recruiting and traveling that they do to bring officers in and to weed people out—that they did not want to lower their standards; that he would challenge churches and civic groups to send good candidates—that 15% was ridiculous. Councilman Gilbert stated that he likes to hear him talking about working together as a team—that he admired him for saying this. Chief Dodd assured everyone that his Staff and himself would be at neighborhood meetings to see the concerns; that they would network with Public Works—that they could not do this alone.

Councilman Murphy stated that before Chief Cooper retired, he was asked to keep the leadership together and now Chief Rawlston will retire. He asked Chief Dodd how much rearranging there would be. Chief Dodd responded that he hated to name names, but it would consist of Chief Williams, Chief Maffett, and Officer Kennedy and Officer Carroll; that two positions were open—his and Chief Rawlston’s, and these were moves they had to make; that both of the new Captains are well respected and will add to the team. Councilman Murphy mentioned that there were a lot of shootings in his district and also a Weed and Seed. He asked what his plans were for collaboration and meeting with prosecutors to see what the profile of future shooters are. He questioned if Chief Dodd would ask for such a meeting. Chief Dodd responded “absolutely”—that it is our responsibility as a community; that something needs to be done to bridge adolescents to adult manhood; that if they do nothing but stand on corners, we are losing; that he would offer his Staff to anyone who wanted them. Councilman Murphy asked about Community Policing, stating that with our staffing level, we don’t have enough to do true community policing. He questioned if one academy would get us there or if Chief Dodd had any other creative ideas.

Chief Dodd responded that he had some ideas; that he had studied this since 1970; that honestly over the last ten years, community policing had just been given “lip service”; that people have to be trained; that it is imperative that officers and citizens take care of problems before they become crimes. He mentioned grant money; that there is no area now that is not covered by a captain and officer.

Councilman Murphy stated that the officers that serve in his part of town are eager and hard working. He asked if we would be able to do this without getting the COPS Grant, which was more than one year away.

Chief Dodd reiterated that there was an officer in every area of town; that we have to sell to organizations that this is our focus; that we had done this hard core and then backed off; that we have enough to do it now with what we have; that covering up dirt is a drain on manpower; that they did want to be pro-active and handle problems before they become crimes.

Councilwoman Berz stated that the Police Dept. did a wonderful job working with Parks and Recreation, and she wanted to commend Chief Dodd; that Chief Williams had been at some of their meetings; that many people may not understand the model of community policing is truly the community—that it is everybody and is a total community effort; that we do have sufficient police but need more.

Councilman Benson stated that it started with responsible parenting.

Councilwoman Robinson mentioned that we had people coming from South Africa and other countries, and we find them living in public housing, and they end up not understanding how to access help. She noted that the Police Dept. did interact with Public Housing and their Police Force. She asked how this could be strengthened; that new immigrants will be arriving soon, and these new residents will be from Afghanistan and Iran and our international community will grow. She asked if this would be an area we would have to grow into; that we had already seen this with Hispanics and law translation.

Chief Dodd noted a family in the west side that Captain Kennedy had worked closely with; that they recently went through cultural diversity training through Ms. Cosley's office; that they would take any training available; that with Volkswagen coming in, we have to find bridges.

Councilwoman Scott commended Mayor Littlefield, stating that he had made an excellent nomination for Police Chief. Mayor Littlefield stated that Chief Dodd comes from the old city—that he came from East Lake.

Councilman McGary asked Chief Dodd the difference between himself and Chief Cooper and how long he planned to stay? Chief Dodd responded that he was 46 years old and would stay as long as they let him; that he hated to speak to differences between he and Chief Cooper; that he had worked under 6-7 chiefs and each person brings his own special leadership; that he and Chief Cooper were friends and had discussed each others' strengths; that it would not be right to compare; that he (Chief Dodd) was approachable and friendly to a fault; that he did not care for negative people; that he had to meet the public a lot. Councilman McGary asked him how he would have handled the Eric Wright and Officer Daves' situation and about Police Policy in this regards.

Chief Dodd responded that this situation should have been handled quicker; that there was mis-information on both sides; that Mr. Wright did “blow” through the intersection; that often officers have to “back off”, and this comes with experience; that Officer Daves did not block the door as had been reported; that technically Officer Daves did not do anything wrong; that as Chief of Police, he (Chief Dodd) would have met with the family. He added that Officer Daves did not know the situation and almost got killed at the intersection; that he should have backed off when he realized it was a medical emergency; that sometimes you can’t go strictly by the policy; that there will be a new policy.

Councilman McGary asked if the average citizen would be educated as to the new policy? Chief Dodd stated that they could be educated through the Citizens Police Academy; that they would encourage people to come out and learn about the uses of force.

Councilman Murphy noted that this was coming during the budget season. He asked Chief Dodd if he felt like they would be more successful in obtaining grants for equipment and technology; that if we were better off financially next year, what would be at the top of his list as to technology that would be important to help officers do their jobs?

Chief Dodd responded that they had been fairly successful in grants; that they had an in-house grants person and had been fairly successful; that they would like more grant money; that technology is where the future lies. He mentioned Intell, stating that the Police Dept. knows who the bad guys are; that if you are a criminal in this City, the Police can target you. He mentioned Intell-Wise would be a technological tool to help them in law enforcement.

Councilman Murphy pressed for what would be at the top of his list for technical improvements if we could budget more money? Chief Dodd responded a Mesh System—Intell-Base Fusion Center so that they could trace bullets in the city.

Chairman Benson asked for a consensus vote, stating that Chief Dodd had done well. There was a resounding, absolutely “yes”!

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 P.M.