

Minutes of the Public Safety Committee Meeting, Thursday, April 22, 2010

(As taken from a video recording.)

This meeting was held in the City Hall auditorium. It was called to order by Chairperson Wanda Doyle. Council Members Shirley Sessions and Frank Shuman also attended. In addition to the above elected officials, City Manager Diane Schleicher, Police Chief James Price, Fire Chief Skip Sasser, DPW Head Joe Wilson, Zoning Director Jonathan Lynn, and TEMA Director Jimmy Brown were present.

The minutes from the previous were approved by the voting members present.

Under the heading of New Business, the Chairperson opened a discussion of the impending passage of the ordinance permitting motorized carts to operate on city streets. Chief Price led most of the discussion, which touched on many issues regarding them. Some of these issues are as follows. Chief Price recommended that the ordinance prohibit the use of the carts during the hours of darkness, although this issue could be readdressed after a suitable trial period. Safety equipment which must be installed on the carts was discussed. It was decided that the prohibition of the carts on Jones Avenue be removed, since the speed limit on that street is 25 miles per hour. A recount of the crossing points on Butler Avenue/Highway 80, as allowed by the Georgia DOT was given. The cost of the registration decal, and minor points of the inspection and registration were brought up. It was decided that the City Attorney would be asked to recommend the types and numbers of signs regarding the use of the carts be installed. There now followed a discussion, lead primarily by the City Manager, of the issue of parking decals. The existing proposal required that carts pay for parking or purchase an annual parking permit, since the owners of the carts had not paid ad valorem taxes as they had on normal street-legal vehicles. It was suggested that the registration decal could substitute for the state registration document. It was finally decided to leave this issue for further discussion in the future.

The next item on the agenda concerned pedestrian safety on 18th Street between Butler and the beach. Shirley Sessions noted that several residents were concerned since there are no sidewalks there, and pedestrians walking in the street are in danger from passing cars. One possible solution was mentioned as being the installation of a sidewalk on one side of the street, with some issues of this being the number of parking spaces lost, the cost, and storm water drainage. Chief Price noted that there have been no vehicle-pedestrian encounters there in his memory. It was decided that more research was needed, particularly in the area of cost.

The next item on the agenda concerned increased police presence in the business district, with Chief Price pointing out that the Bicycle Patrol was already operating, almost a month earlier than in previous years. The Chairperson stated that there was a funding issue involved. Chief Price replied that he would ask Chantel Morton exactly what days and hours a foot patrol would be needed, and that he would then produce a dollar amount that would cover the wages of the officers appointed.

Under the topic of Old Business, Jimmy Brown gave an update on the upcoming hurricane evacuation exercise, now scheduled for July 14. He used a Powerpoint slide show, which unfortunately was not in the view of the video cameras recording this meeting. He asked all present to email him with proposed changes or additions they felt were needed.

Public safety issues for Parades was now discussed, with the Chairperson pointing out that it had already been decided to prohibit the throwing of any items from floats, that no adult beverages be allowed on floats, and that units could not be allowed to stop and perform, since this caused gaps and delays in the progress of the parade. Chief Price suggested that parade organizers be required to provide more volunteers to help with traffic and earlier starting times be required. The City Manager inquired why the Beach Bum parade was held on Friday. Frank Shuman that it was traditional, and suggested that doing it on a Saturday would make it even harder to control. To keep parades moving, it was suggested that walking units be put in the front of the parade. The discussion was ended with the Chairperson asking committee members to bring additional suggestions to the next meeting.

The next topic for discussion involved the proposed new public safety building. The City Manager reported that she had met with county officials and been informed that the earliest any SPLOST money could be expected was in the fall, and that it would probably not be as much as we expected. The county will not provide us with an exact amount, nor do they have a time line in place as to the dates of disbursements.

The final topic of discussion involved cross walks between the two nursing homes on Van Horn. The City Manager reported that we had not gotten a quote for the cost of the project, and suggested that this probably should be a task handled by the Infrastructure Committee.

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.