

MINUTES

McCall City Council Special Joint Meeting and Work Session with the Police Advisory Committee Wednesday, January 12, 2005

Table of Contents

CALL TO ORDER

- McCall Police Advisory Committee
David Fields, Scott Findlay, Frances Ford, Louie Howard, Rod Nielsen, Helen Spaulding, Martin Thiede, Kim Zeydel, Austin Foudy, Jessica Moore
- McCall City Council
Council Member Bertram, Council Member Eimers, Council Member Greer, Council Member Muller, and Council Member Robertson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Minutes of December 14, 2004

WORK SESSION

- Work Session with the McCall City Council

ADJOURNMENT

CALL TO ORDER

David Fields, Police Advisory Committee Chairman, called the Joint Meeting and Work Session between the McCall City Council and Police Advisory Committee to order at 4:08 P.M.

Members present from the Police Advisory Committee were David Fields, Scott Findlay, Frances Ford, Rod Nielsen, Martin Thiede, Kim Zeydel, and Jessica Moore.

Members present from the McCall City Council were Council Member Bertram, Council Member Eimers, Council Member Muller, and Council Member Robertson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Kim Zeydel moved to approve the Police Advisory Committee minutes from December 14, 2004. Frances Ford seconded the motion. All Committee members voted aye. The motion carried.

WORK SESSION

Mr. Fields gave a multimedia presentation regarding the history of the Police Advisory Committee. Mr. Fields stated that the Committee was formed by the McCall City Council as a reaction to what was occurring at the local bars during the time. The Committee first met on July 16, 2002 and prepared a list of needs to be addressed. The seven item list included the total number of department employees, number of officers responding to incidents, department involvement with youth, parental contact, perception of police profiling, officer discretion, and the need to organize a public forum. He stated that the Committee omitted the need to address the issues at the local bars in their list. The Committee held two public meetings where a broad, diverse representation from the community voiced their concerns with the Police Department. As a result of the public comment, the Committee developed a prioritized list of issues to be discussed. During the first six months, the Committee developed a plan to address the youth issue which included creating a system to track warnings, allowing for officer discretion, parental involvement and notification, establishing a Youth Officer in the school district, and creating a collaboration of youth service agencies. The Committee also discussed Department staffing. It was unanimously agreed that 24 hour / 7-day-a-week (24/7) police coverage was needed for the community. In order to provide such coverage, it would take five patrol officers, one sergeant, and staff. Mr. Fields stated that he was disappointed to see the Council eliminate one of the officer positions in the Fiscal Year 04-05 budget. Mr. Fields stated that since the inception of the Committee, they have discussed a Memorandum of Understanding with the school, Memorandum of Understanding with the Sheriff's department, been involved with the selection of officers, promotions of officers, the First Responder program, Department staffing levels, the Police Department budget, vehicle leases, the Forester's issue, Western Regional Institute for Community Oriented Public Safety (WRICOP's) Report, police training, the Department's relationship with other agencies, and issues with parking and traffic. Mr. Fields stated that benefits of the Committee include the diversity of the Committee membership, the ability for the members to act as the "eyes and ears of the community" by bringing up any issues to the attention of the Police Chief, acting as a sounding board for the Police Department, allowing for a place the community can go to express their concerns, allowing for community input in hiring and promoting officers, providing for checks and balances to the system, and providing another avenue for community resources and public relations.

Frances Ford stated that she became involved on the Police Advisory Committee as a result of the issues with the youth in the community. As a member of the school board, she was aware how the local students felt threatened and harassed by the Police

Department. The membership of the Committee was very diverse and provided for a wide range of opinions. She has been impressed by the amount of public input received by the Committee as it provides a venue for people to vent their concerns. Ms. Ford stated that the City is very fortunate to have Chief Appa and she is impressed by the quality level of staffing at the Police Department. Ms. Ford stated that she is concerned about the lack of participation by the current Council membership on the Committee. She stated that during its origination two Council Members used to be active members on the Committee.

Scott Findlay stated that he became a member of the Committee since he believed the City had issues with the Police Department that needed to be addressed. He stated that Chief Appa took over the leadership of the Police Department with existing personnel and policy issues and has done a good job in remedying those problems. While serving on the Committee he was surprised at the length of time it took to fill open positions due to the training requirements of POST. He believes Chief Appa has done a good job in getting his Department staff out and getting to know the community. Even though he is a Committee member, he still has disagreements with the Chief over several issues such as discretion for DUI enforcement. Mr. Findlay stated that the public often confuses actions done by the Idaho State Police with those of the McCall Police Department as they have similar uniforms. He doesn't believe that the quality of officers assigned to patrol McCall by the Idaho State Police has been very good recently. Mr. Findlay said that progress has been made in regards to the Department even though it hasn't been a smooth process.

Kim Zeydel stated that she joined the Committee as a school teacher concerned about the issues with the local area youth, as well as a downtown business owner who was concerned about downtown parking. Ms. Zeydel stated that she sides with the Police Department on some issues but disagrees on others.

Martin Thiede stated that he feels that the Committee is disconnected from the City Council. He stated that he would like to see a better rapport with the Council. By serving on the Committee he has come to understand the position of the Police Department and their duties. He believes the Police Department is moving in a positive direction.

Rod Nielsen stated that the Committee initially had a good rapport with the City Council when Kirk Eimers and Ralph Colton were members. The two groups haven't had much interaction since Ralph left the Committee. Mr. Nielsen suggested that the two groups meet every six months to discuss the issues being talked about in the Committee.

Jessica Moore stated that she feels it its important to have a youth voice on the Committee. As an officer's daughter she is able to present complaints from students to the attention of the Department and the Committee. She is also able to inform the students of their rights and refers them to voice their concerns to the Committee.

Council Member Bertram asked if the Committee has ever considered expanding the Youth Membership to include students in grades 9 and 10. Mr. Fields stated that the Committee has historically tried to fill two youth positions, but it has been difficult to maintain the participation of the Youth members.

Council Member Robertson asked if there is consensus about the number one issue facing the Committee. He asked if drug enforcement was the biggest concern facing the group.

Mr. Fields stated that the agenda has recently been created based upon the concerns being voiced by the public. He stated that drug enforcement is one of the top concerns of the Committee.

Ms. Ford stated that the department needs sufficient personnel to address drug enforcement. She stated that she was concerned over the Council decision to reduce the Police Department staff during the budget process. She stated that the issue with Louie Howard has taken a considerable amount of the Committee's time during the past six months.

Mr. Findlay stated that he was disappointed that the request for ten officers wasn't approved in the City budget. He stated that without ten officers the City can't have 24/7 Police coverage, which was a major initiative of the Committee based upon the public input they received. He knows the decision was budget driven but it resulted in a tough blow to the Committee's morale. He believes that the presence of the Police in the community is important due to the increased number of new people moving here. He stated that prior to joining the Committee he believed the Department was overstaffed but has since learned otherwise. Mr. Findlay stated that 24/7 coverage was an idea that has been discussed since Chief Parker oversaw the Department but the City still hasn't financed the ability to do so.

Council Member Robertson stated that the City Council is trying to determine how the Committee fits into the role of the City government. Based upon what he has heard at the meeting, he sees that the establishment of the Committee benefits the Police Department and allows for another venue to field complaints from the community.

Mr. Findlay stated that the Police Advisory Committee is very different than other Committees. The Planning and Zoning Commission has specific City Code sections to follow and the Parks Advisory Committee has established goals to achieve such as developing recreational activities. He sees the Police Advisory Committee operating as a more Human Resources related function where the public can sit down and address their problems. He believes the Committee has been able to diffuse several issues at their level. Mr. Findlay stated that even when the bar issue became a hot topic the Committee held a meeting with a room full of people from both sides of the fence. He stated that many of those attending were able to leave the meeting feeling more informed.

Ms. Ford stated that the City is fortunate to have a quality Police Chief who has been able to bring experience to the community. She stated that it was good move for the City of McCall to form an advisory committee instead of spending money on an ombudsman like the City of Boise.

Council Member Robertson stated that the Council is trying to figure out where the City, the Committee, and the Police Department fit into the role of the community. He stated that the Council is just now becoming aware about the Committee's concern of eliminating an officer position during the budget process. Council Member Robertson stated that he knew the Committee wanted to have ten officers staffed in the Department, but he didn't hear the passion of their initiative until today.

Mr. Fields stated that he didn't know where the budget process went wrong. He spent several hours with staff during the budget process and the proposed level of staffing was always included in the budget. He stated that the next thing he knew the City Council made the determination to eliminate one of the positions.

Ms. Ford stated that she believes the City Council should give time for a Committee report on the agenda on a regular basis. She thinks that the work of the Committee is sometimes overlooked when placed on the consent agenda.

Mr. Findlay asked if the Council thinks there is a lack of recommendations being presented to them from the Committee.

Council Member Bertram stated that she didn't realize that the Committee served as another forum for the community to address their concerns. It was her understanding that the Committee was established to provide advice and direction to the Police Department. Council Member Bertram stated that the public shouldn't be required to come to an Advisory group to voice concerns. She felt as if the public was required to get the Committee's permission to talk to the City Council. She is afraid that people may feel intimidated in the Committee setting and they should always have the right to freely voice their concerns to their elected officials. Council Member Bertram stated that community members should be able to bring their concerns and ideas to the City Council, and then the Council can determine if it should be referred to the Committee level.

Mr. Fields stated that the Committee was originally organized because of the concerns over the issues at the local bars, he would like to see the Council bring other issues they would like discussed to the Committee's attention.

Ms. Zeydel stated that the current membership of the Committee is very diverse. She would like the Council to approve the additional appointment of Dr. Donicht so the link with the school district exists.

Chief Appa stated that the Committee's meeting with the Council was scheduled after he presented an agenda bill in November for the appointment of Dr. Donicht and Ms. Huish. He would still like to see the candidates appointed to the Committee.

Council Member Robertson said that over the past twelve months Police Chief Appa has been accused, tried, and acquitted. He stated that during that time, the Council never sat down and discussed the issue due to other concerns such as the changeover in City Manager. He didn't want to make the appointment of Dr. Donicht and Ms. Huish until the Council had the opportunity to know what the purpose of the Committee was and if there was an issue to warrant the need for the membership to continue to exist.

Mayor Eimers stated that the Committee's handling of the youth issue was well handled as evidenced by the fact that the complaints from the community have ceased to exist. He would like to see the Committee work in the same manner in finding solutions to solve the ongoing bar issues. He stated that he appreciates the Committee's work on diffusing other issues, but would like their attention to be concentrated on solving the bar issue. Mayor Eimers stated that the Committee projects an image of only seeing the issue from the perspective of the Police Department. He stated that the Committee needs to work in the same diligent capacity they used to solve the youth issue.

ADJOURNMENT

Without further business, the Council Members adjourned from the meeting at 5:22 p.m.

Kirk L. Eimers, Mayor

ATTEST:

Dan Irwin, City Clerk