



PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMISSION
September 14, 2005 Meeting Summary
Municipal Manager's Conference Room
8th Floor, City Hall; Anchorage, Alaska

ATTENDANCE

Present:

Mike Smulski
Sam O'Connor
Lynda Zaugg
Elsa Sargento
Chuck Springer
Mark Mew (excused to leave early to give presentation to Boy Scouts)

Members Absent:

Robyn Birkedal (unexcused)
Precyous Council (unexcused)
Tony Piper (excused)

Others Present:

Bob Linton, State of Alaska District Attorney
Heather Handyside, Director, Community Preparedness
Audie Holloway, Deputy Chief, Anchorage Police Dept.
Mike Murphy, Battalion Chief, Fire Safety & Training Division, Anchorage Fire Dept.
Catherine Curtis, Office of the Municipal Manager

MEETING SUMMARY

Meeting called to order at 6:06pm. July 13, 2005 Minutes were unanimously approved.

Office of Emergency Management (OEM) report

OEM Director Heather Handyside gave an update on ways the MOA is ensuring preparedness, in the wake of problems encountered during Hurricane Katrina emergency and recovery efforts.

- *Satellite phones are now in the hands of decision makers so they can be used immediately in an emergency.*
- *An 800 mhz city-wide communications system for emergency first responders will be up and running by the end of 2007. Police & Fire systems will be encoded on the new system.*
- *The Municipality's radio systems are compatible with the Alaska Land Mobile Radio network (inter-agency communications system), but are also self-sufficient and can be used outside of the network. The MOA will operate out-of-pocket rather than pay the State of Alaska rental fees for participation in the network.*
- *Plans are focused on getting radios compatible with the city-wide system in the hands of first responders, including non-profit agencies.*
- *Renewed focus on public preparedness has been implemented, including revised AWARE presentations for groups upon request.*

A question was posed about communication problems that arose during the Northern Shield exercises at Kincaid Park recently. Ms. Handyside assured the Commission that the new system provides the highest level of clarity and

coverage possible and that Northern Edge exercise challenges were the result of user error rather than technology. Lynda Zaugg asked what the Commission can do to help. Heather will consider the question and let the group know. Elsa Sargento expressed interest in arranging an AWARE presentation for a group of which she is a member. Ms. Handyside urged commissioners to contact her directly with requests.

Anchorage Police Department (APD) report

Deputy Chief Audie Holloway reported for APD. Web-based reporting for certain misdemeanor crimes is working well and is saving the public as well as APD clerks a lot of time. Another facet to this system is being piloted by Fred Meyer stores. Shoplifting constitutes a large percentage of juvenile crime and Fred Meyer can now report juvenile offenders directly to the intake office at McLaughlin Youth Center.

On the subject of gangs, D.C. Holloway reported that several significant arrests had been made that week and that gang activity had been fairly quiet of late. A special assignment unit is in the very early stages of gearing up to work on gang suppression and intelligence. He emphasized that this is a long term project and there is no quick fix to the problem. Discussion ensued on the issue of gangs. D.C. Holloway stated that officers need to be involved to influence the repercussions of bad behavior so it doesn't escalate, but they also need to be involved in the prevention of crime.

Chair Smulski report on APD ride-along

Chairman Mike Smulski reported that his ride-along with APD was very educational and he requested that all Commission members participate in a ride-along at least once each year.

Presentation by D.A. Bob Linton on court crowding issues

Mr. Linton provided a hand-out (see attached) to help explain the backlog of court cases, past and present. The handout tracks cases from 7/25-9/12. All cases must be prepared for trial by both APD and the District Attorney's office, but only a small fraction ever go to trial. He described it as "strictly a funding problem" and said that more staff in every area is needed to support the caseload. Adding more staff in one area can add to the backlog. For example, increasing the number of police officers and providing APD with more training can increase the number of arrests and court cases but, without adding more prosecutors, judges, and other court personnel, the case load increases, causing more delay.

Mr. Linton explained that most cases do not go to trial. Some are dismissed, approximately 75% plead out, and often those that do go to court have been postponed so long that witnesses/victims may be reluctant to participate. One example of this when a four-year-old victim's sexual assault case did not go up for trial for four years. By that time the family had been living out of state for years and the parent was hesitant to make the child relive the experience. Another factor is that victim/ witness memory can suffer over time, which can affect cases negatively.

When asked how the Commission can help, Mr. Linton responded that it is important that the group knows the reality of the situation and can explain it to those who inquire. He said that the change must be broad-based, but cannot happen without people accepting the reality of crime occurring in their own neighborhoods, and not just elsewhere. The problem is clearly at every level of the system. He said that a lot of places in the country are "doing more with less," but that it would take an overhaul of the entire system to correct the current problems. He feels that a system in which judges are elected could influence the problem positively.

Discussion ensued and D.C. Holloway talked about the long term role of police in helping to lower crime and therefore mitigating the court crowding issue. Many officers are needed at first to stem the tide and influence prevention, then over a generation or so policing could ideally become more neighborhood-focused. This would entail aggressive funding and strong community support.

Sam O'Connor and Mike Smulski recommended that the Mayor and Assembly Public Safety Chair Paul Bauer be given a copy of this summary (once the document is approved) along with a letter from the Commission, after hearing a presentation by the MOA Prosecutor. D.C. Holloway will issue the invitation to the MOA Prosecutor to address the Commission.

Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) report

Mike Murphy, Battalion Chief for Fire Safety & Training reported that the new Fire Academy started last week, with 18 people attending (13 paramedics and 5 EMT license students). This class will get the department close to 400 people, just under their authorized manpower.

The department was reviewed by Insurance Services Offices (ISO) and currently enjoys a rating of III (I being highest, IX being no protection). This number indicates to insurance companies how well a community can respond to a fire; the companies base their homeowner premiums on the ISO number. AFD has made great strides in this area and is working to qualify for a II rating. Last year the department qualified for a rating of 3 for the Hillside area, where they once qualified for a rating of 8. The 50,000 gallon water tank in Girdwood will be relocated closer to the road, which should help the ISO rating.

Normally, the AFD has five ladder trucks (including Eagle River), with one in reserve. The Reserve truck is now in use while another is in for repair from an accident. The insurance company of the person who hit the damaged truck will pay for the repairs, which is expected to take between 8 month to a year. The department, through an "emergency purchase" anticipates having a new truck in about a month, so they will have a reserve truck again at that time.

Plans for the new training center are moving forward. Station Four near Lake Otis and Tudor will be torn down and a larger structure will be built in its place,

extending into the lot behind It, where a trailer park is now located. Construction will start next year and the opening is slated for 2007.

In the wake of Hurricane Katrina, the department is evaluating their contingency plans.

Discussion ensued about different rates of growth for AFD and APD, crime prevention measures, and how to help prevention efforts. Chair Smulski asked Chuck Springer to develop a position paper for the Commission on how to use proactive policing and social science to reduce crime by getting ahead of the trend.

Bylaw draft discussion, amendment, and vote

The group reviewed the bylaw draft, made a few minor adjustments, and the bylaws were adopted by unanimous vote. The Commission will elect a new Chairperson at the November 9 meeting, to allow new and reappointed Commission members to participate.

PSAC Web site bios, formatting, & deadline for information submittal

Catherine Curtis reported that all bios had been received and that she will receive training to begin creating the PSAC Web site the following Monday.

PSAC Information Sheet

Commission agreed to adjourn and to review the information sheet at the October meeting (now delayed until November, when Chair Smulski will be in attendance).

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for October 12, 2005, Mayor's Conference Room. The meeting adjourned at 8:43pm

PSAC Summary 9.14.05
10/14/2005 3:54 PM

I. Only a small percentage of cases go to trial; the rest are pleas.

	Felonies Referred	Felonies Accepted	Felony Trials	Misd Referred	Misd Accepted	Misd Trials
Calendar year 2003	2322	1785	55	3228	2920	10
Calendar year 2004	2415	1881	50	3025	2474	20

2. Defendant plead because they believe they will be convicted at trial, but trials do not happen on time.

Week	Felony Cases Calendar/Go	Misd cases Calendar/Go
07-25-05	36/1	
08-01-05	23/1 (same)	
08-08-05	19/1	49/0
08-12-05	25/2 (1 same)	56/1
08-22-05	27/1 (1 same)	54/1
08-29-05	19/1 (1 same)	49/0
09-06-05	28/2 (1 same)	68/0
09-12-05	24/2 (1 same)	

3. There numbers are too big to handle with current resources.

A. There are only 3 superior court judges trying criminal cases. There are only 2-4 district judges available with the workload of routine matters.

B. Trials get postponed. Officers should serve-subpoenas to witnesses when trial date changed, but there are too many subpoenas to be issued time and time again. Judges "continue" subpoenas. No actual notice to witnesses. Prosecutors quit issuing subpoenas until trial. APD issues some subpoenas on pre-determined dates, but dates change.

C. Victims and witnesses get frustrated and give up caring. Particularly in emotional cases: murder; sex.