



## **PUBLIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMISSION**

### **October 12, 2005 Meeting Summary**

Municipal Manager's Conference Room  
8th Floor, City Hall; Anchorage, Alaska

#### **ATTENDANCE**

##### **Present:**

Precyous Council  
Mark Mew  
Tony Piper  
Chuck Springer  
Lynda Zaugg

##### **Members Absent:**

Sam O'Connor (excused)  
Mike Smulski (excused)  
Robyn Birkedal (unexcused)  
Elsa Sargento (unexcused)

##### **Others Present:**

Catherine Curtis, Office of the Municipal Manager  
Craig Goodrich, Deputy Chief, Health & Safety, Anchorage Fire Department (Now incoming Chief, Anchorage Fire Department!)  
Heather Handyside, Director, Community Preparedness  
Audie Holloway, Deputy Chief, Anchorage Police Department  
Dave Koch, Sergeant, Anchorage Police Department  
Denis LeBlanc, Municipal Manager  
John McConnaughey, Assistant Municipal Prosecutor

#### **MEETING SUMMARY**

Meeting called to order at 6:04pm.

##### **Anchorage Police Department (APD) report**

*Deputy Chief Audie Holloway reported that the APD Citizens Academy started that evening. He passed his usual report time to Sgt. Koch and Andrew Halcro for their presentations on methamphetamine issues.*

##### **Presentation by Sgt. Dave Koch, APD on methamphetamine issues**

*Sgt. Koch has been with APD for over 26 years and has spent much of that time working in drug enforcement. He discussed ways that drugs are changing the business culture by influencing what stores carry and how they market items, i.e., some stores inadvertently keep tools for methamphetamine creation (lighters, baking soda, ephedrine products) near the counter since they have become high sale items. Officers are seeing an increasing number of methamphetamine labs in the area, and also an increasing number of drug arrests involving gun possession. Meth creation and use seriously affects a broad spectrum of people, including children and families who are affected both physically and emotionally by the environment; fire fighters who work to extinguish meth lab fires; fire fighters, police officers, and other workers who are exposed to fumes at meth lab sites; officers who arrest the offenders; etc.*

*Discussion about treatment options followed. Sgt. Koch said treatment is available for meth users, but bed space is limited. Drug treatment is not available in most correctional facilities, except for Wildwood (as Precyous Council and Lynda Zaugg pointed out). There is a federally funded therapeutic community program in Kenai.*

Sgt. Koch said that School Resource Officers are working on prevention efforts with students in the Anchorage School District. He also discussed the Assembly's recent action to limit purchase of methamphetamine precursor drugs (ephedrine) to 9 grams per day.

### **Presentation by Andrew Halcro on methamphetamine issues**

Andrew Halcro, former State senator and president and CEO of Avis Alaska Rent-a-Car, discussed the costs businesses incur due to methamphetamine use. Last year his agency had 15 stolen cars out at one time. Many of the cars were recovered in front of meth labs and/or were found with weapons inside. He feels that businesses can't afford not to drug test employees. He reiterated the costs to government and to public health as well. He emphasized the lack of bed space for treatment, noting that there are private treatment facilities with bed space, but many users cannot afford them.

Mr. Halcro feels the Assembly's action is not strict enough and cited laws in Iowa and Oklahoma that limit purchase of meth precursor drugs to 9 grams per month, rather than 9 grams per day. He said Oklahoma saw a drop in their number of meth labs within three months of passing that law. He also endorses writing a sunset provision into the law so progress can be assessed after four or five years and, if results aren't desirable, the law could be repealed. Iowa has such a provision written into their methamphetamine precursor drug law.

Mr. Halcro said a drug is awaiting FDA approval that could potentially be substituted for ephedrine but cannot be used to make meth. Approval for the drug could take up to nine months and it may not be available to the public for a year.

Discussion ensued about whether changing local laws is enough to make a difference. Mr. Halcro, D.C. Holloway, and Municipal Manager Denis LeBlanc all said that real change requires a statewide law. Local laws only make users migrate to communities where they can access the precursor drugs easily. The group discussed putting registers in stores that people who buy precursor drugs must sign, and whether such measures are a deterrent. D.C. Holloway said that, though APD does not have the manpower to monitor store registries, any action that causes the user to have direct contact with another person—pulls them out of their "world" and causes them to engage with another person—can be a deterrent. Store registries can also be helpful in convictions. D.C. Holloway said that if they had to choose one drug to crack down on even more than they already are, it would be methamphetamines.

Denis LeBlanc reminded the group that the Assembly debated the store registry issue for over two months and the community had the opportunity to give testimony. He suggested the Commission write a letter to the Mayor encouraging him to endorse a stricter methamphetamine precursor law as one of his legislative priorities for the upcoming year and for his address to the Alaska Municipal League the week of November 7<sup>th</sup>.

The PSAC unanimously agreed and Chuck Springer offered to research the laws that Mr. Halcro mentioned. He will circulate his research to the Commission members. Precyous Council will research what legislation is in progress now, and Tony Piper will draft the letter to Mayor Begich.

### **Presentation by MOA Prosecutor John McConnaughy III on court crowding**

The MOA Prosecutor's office processes between 9-10,000 cases per year—many more cases than the State District Attorney's office processes (as was acknowledged by D.A. Bob Linton in Sept. meeting). A large number of cases are resolved without trial. That week the MOA Prosecutor's office had 170 cases on trial. The decision about which cases will go to trial is made on the Monday of each week. Roughly 50% of the cases are continued. Every case that is continued creates a chain of process and work for his staff. Delays can benefit the defense and harm prosecutors' cases since witnesses' memories fade and they may move out of town/state. Delays can also seriously affect the victims, who have the right to a speedy trial as written in the victims' rights amendment.

The prosecutor's office has had some success with a program that diverts cases out of their trial load. Mr. McConnaughy agrees with D.A. Bob Linton that the backlog is a problem and that the solution is not easily identified. Chuck Springer asked if the PSAC can do anything to help. Mr. McConnaughy responded no, that one area cannot be improved; any improvement must occur in all areas to make a real impact. After some consideration he identified some changes that could help the problem, including limiting continuances, limiting the number of times procedural actions can be engaged, and setting realistic, reasonable trial calls and deadlines. He emphasized that such changes would need to be made statewide.

The Commission discussed writing another letter to Mayor Begich supporting Mr. McConnaughy's ideas. Mark Mew asked if the Alaska Judicial Council has any authority over this area. Lynda Zaugg offered to contact the council to see if they do have the authority to change deadlines, etc. and, if so, to request that a representative attend the Commission's November meeting.

### **Anchorage Fire Department (AFD) report**

Craig Goodrich, AFD Deputy Chief for Health & Safety, had no significant updates for the department. He informed the group of a four-hour Safety Orientation that will be offered to—and is required of—individuals who are interested in riding on a fire truck. D.C. Goodrich also advised the group to remember, as they look at the proposed budget, that it is likely to change dramatically through the review process.

### **Other Business**

September 14, 2005 meeting summary was unanimously approved.

Chuck Springer distributed a Referral Form he created for review by the PSAC (see attached).

*Lynda Zaugg and Tony Piper had not had a chance to meet and discuss ways to inform the public about the PSAC. They will meet and report to the group at the November meeting.*

**Office of Emergency Management (OEM) report**

*Director Heather Handyside had to leave before she was able to address the group. She left the following report:*

*The OEM is currently focused on finalizing the Emergency Operations Plan: the macro-level umbrella plan for all community agency response to disaster. The OEM is accepting public input on the plan, which can be downloaded from the OEM homepage on the MOA Web site. The plan is scheduled to be approved by the Assembly at the end of November.*

**NEXT MEETING**

*The next meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2005, Mayor's Conference Room. The meeting adjourned at 8:00pm*

PSAC Summary 10.12.05  
12/14/2005 2:23 PM