

April 9, 2007

Licton Springs Community Council Report for April

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for April 4, 2007

April found the North Precinct Advisory Committee a little bit squeezed by the renovation taking place within the building, however we managed to get everyone in. The guest for the evening was Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck. The topic Peter covered is one that has been on the front burner with us many times in the past, Public Safety! Councilmember Steinbrueck has been a strong advocate for increasing the number of patrol officers in the Seattle Police Department. It has been a long time coming since the office of the Mayor, the City Council and the SPD have all been on the same page when it came to staffing numbers for patrol officers. Even though we didn't get everything we'd asked for (do we ever?), the proposed increase in the number of officers each year is a GOOD STEP in the right direction! It was also noted that the input to the Mayor's Office and the City Council from "concerned citizens" ensured that this topic stayed on the front burner (phone calls, letters and e-mails). In addition to putting more uniforms on the streets, there will also be an added emphasis on "Public Areas" (parks), and "traffic safety." Another new tactic to be employed will be "timely crime reports." The idea is to keep residents on alert as to the type of crime happening in their area. Maybe it's an upswing in residential burglaries or auto theft, but the idea is to keep the public aware and alert just in case. Expect to see these reports issued monthly (?).

The following are two "hand-outs," one from the Mayor's Office and the other from Peter Steinbrueck. The latter is a summary of how the new staffing is expected to work and how the plan was derived (some of this might seem a little dry, but what can I say).

Ken Thompson

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels

Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan - March 7, 2007

Executive Summary

The Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan is the most significant change to how we police our City in more than 30 years. It will not only expand our patrol force, it is a faster, stronger

and smarter approach to protecting our neighborhoods, faster response time regardless of the time of day, day of the week, or season of the year; stronger police presence when responding and smarter use of patrol resources to focus on persistent problems that can affect quality of life in the city. The plan puts officers where they're needed when they're needed.

The Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan fixes three problems:

While the Seattle Police Department meets the commonly accepted response time goal for larger cities, averaging seven minutes for high-priority emergency calls, the average is just that - an average. Response times are faster when the workload is low but exceed seven minutes during the busiest times of the week when 9-1-1 call volume is high.

There is imbalance between patrol officer deployment and workload, which means that officers are not always available when and where they are needed. Because of the need to respond to 9-1-1 calls during peak workload periods, patrol officers do not have enough time to work on proactive and specific problem solving activities.

How does the Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan fix these problems? It:

Adds a total of 154 new patrol officers over an eight-year period. This has already started with 49 new officers added since mid-2005. Between 2008 and 2012, another 105 officers will be added. The additional officers are needed to meet the targets for faster response time and ability to do more proactive problem solving.

Revises patrol officers' work shifts to match the workload. Since 1997, police patrol has worked nine-hour days with rotating schedules of four days on and two days off, with shift start and end times remaining basically unchanged for more than 30 years. The new plan will make officers available at the times and on the days when they are most needed. Agreeing on the goal of deploying officers more effectively and efficiently, the City and the Seattle Police Officers Guild are currently discussing alternatives. Redraws patrol 66 beats. The last time beats were redrawn was in the 1970's. There are five precincts in Seattle each divided into sectors with each sector divided into beats. The new plan will group 51 beats into 17 sectors across the City. This will allow for more balanced, flexible and effective deployment of patrol officers and will enhance officers' sense of responsibility for the neighborhoods they serve.

Precincts and priorities:

Seattle Police Department is divided into five precincts:

North Precinct - currently covers 32 square miles, population: 236,700; north Seattle between Lake Washington and Puget Sound, and the Ship Canal and the north City limits.

This is the largest precinct and under the new plan, will have five sectors and 15 beats.

Priorities for this precinct: Extended foot, bicycle and car patrol presence in the University District business core; two-officer emphasis patrols in the Aurora corridor, Ballard-Fremont

and Lake City-Northgate business districts; emphasis on Friday and Saturday nights on Greek Row in the spring.

(The other precincts were outlined after the North Precinct but this one is ours.)

March 2, 2007

To: Public Safety, Government Relations & Arts Committee

From: Peter Harris. Central Staff

Re: Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan 2008-2012

Introduction

In the April 3 Committee meeting the Police and Finance Departments will present the "Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan 2008-2012." If you need another copy of the Plan, you can find it on the Mayor's website or ask me.

The Plan is clear and concise and does not need summary here. I would only highlight the box on page 4 of the plan, which lists the "core principles that form the foundation for the analysis and recommendations." It is a very succinct statement of the Plan's intent.

Below I will first describe the relationship of the Plan to Resolution go93o, which requested recommendations from the Mayor on the appropriate number of police officers. Then I will outline how the Police Department developed the recommendation for 105 additional officers between 2008 and 2012. Then I will briefly discuss the relationship between the output measures in the Plan and the performance measurement frame work outlined in the Resolution.

How does the Plan respond to Resolution 30930?

Resolution 30930 (copy attached) has five sections. Section 1 asked the Mayor to recommend the appropriate number of officers through 2012, and to provide a rationale for this number based on public safety outcomes related to nine listed dimensions of police performance. The Plan recommends the number of officers but does not explicitly tie the recommendation to the performance dimensions. See the discussion of performance measurement below.

Section 2 asked that the Mayor's recommendation capture the benefits of improvements in the deployment of patrol officers in location and time. This is a major theme of the Plan.

Section 3 asked the Executive to conduct a survey of residents' opinions about public safety and the police. The Office of Policy & Management delivered the survey proposal in February and is awaiting Council approval, as required by Ordinance 121424.

Section 4 asks for a funding plan for the recommended number of officers and a proposed

2008 budget that is consistent with the funding plan. The last page of the Neighborhood Policing Staffing Plan says adding 21 officers per year for five years would cost an additional \$2.0 to \$2.8 million each year, for a total ongoing cost of \$12.2 million in 2012. The funds would come from some combination of reductions in other General Sub fund costs, “revenue growth from a strong economy” and state restoration of \$20 Million in B&O tax authority. The Council will see the proposed 2008 budget in September. The plan says that if the last two of the three funding sources do not materialize, “the timeline for implementing the hiring targets will be extended.”

Section 5 asks for monthly crime reports. The Police Department has made three monthly reports to the Committee. Staff is considering refinements for future reports.

What is the source of the recommendation for 105 additional officers?

The Plan proposes to add 105 officers to Patrol between 2008 and 2012, including the 20 additional officers in the 2008 Endorsed Budget. Where does the number 105 come from? There were two major steps:

The first step was to apply the Managing Patrol Performance software model described in the Plan. The inputs to the model were recent historical data on 911 calls, response times to these calls, and staffing levels in each precinct. Based on these data, the model predicted how many officers would be needed in each hour of the week to achieve the desired standards of 7 minutes for 911 responses, 30% of Patrol time available for proactive work, and two extra Patrol units available for backup in each precinct.

The second step was to develop a new proposed shift structure that would both fit the predicted demand for officers as well as possible and produce good work schedules for officers. Because no feasible shift structure could perfectly match the hour-by-hour variations in demand for 911 response, and because (from this perspective) it is better to sometimes have too many officers than too few, the proposed shift structure would yield between 35% and 40% available proactive time, and would put much of the additional proactive time where it can be managed to especially good use, such as the time blocks between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and between 10:00 p.m. and 1:00 a.m. The Department then calculated the number of officers it would have to assign to Patrol in order to staff this shift structure week in and week out. Assuming the number of officers assigned to Patrol whose primary function is other than 911 response remained the same (for example, Anti-Crime Teams, Community Policing Teams and bicycle squads), the new shift structure would require a total of 820 officers assigned to Patrol, or 105 more than the current 715.

The Public Access Network (PAN) includes maps and graphs showing trends in vehicle theft, property crime, residential burglary and violent crime. Go to “My Neighborhood Map” on the main PAN page at www.seattle.gov and then to the “Statistics” tab on the map page.

What are the performance measures in the plan?

The quantitative targets in the Plan are (1) the percentage of 911 responses under 7 minutes and (2) the percentage of Patrol time devoted to supervisor-directed proactive problem

solving. The Department will measure these with its computer-aided dispatch system. In addition, "targeted and measured proactive work will be guided by the Department's crime monitoring systems . . . to ensure that SPD is reaching the specific public safety outcomes identified by command staff, policy makers, and the community." The Plan lists several examples of desirable proactive projects in each precinct. (See pages 18-21.)

One of the nine performance dimensions listed in Resolution 30930 is "providing good customer service by responding to calls and attending to community needs." Response time to 911 calls would be an outcome measure on this dimension. Citizens want prompt responses to emergency calls, and the Department seeks to provide them.

Of the other eight performance dimensions, the first is "reducing crime." (See Section r of Resolution 30930 attached.) Response time to 911 calls is probably not a good measure of the Department's success in reducing crime, even as an intermediate output. Although there are no doubt instances in which timely responses reduce harm to victims and help apprehend offenders, the research literature has concluded that that rapid 911 response has no overall effect on crime.

Increasing proactive time, however, may well be an effective crime reduction strategy. The same research literature that finds the standard model of random patrol and rapid response to be ineffective has concluded that policing focused on crime hot spots is effective in reducing crime. As explained in the Plan, of course, making more officer time available will be effective in reducing crime only if the time is well managed. This requires first making the time available in predictably large amounts when it is needed (which the proposed new shift structure attempts to do), and then choosing the right problems to focus on and the right strategies for solving them.

Depending on which problems and strategies are chosen, increased proactive time could improve outcomes not only in crime reduction, but potentially also in most of the other dimensions listed in the resolution, namely, reducing fear of crime, increasing traffic safety, increasing safety in public places, providing good customer service-and holding offenders accountable. Increased proactive time is thus not an answer to the questions of what goals the Department should pursue and how its success can be measured. It is a resource that can be applied as those questions are answered.

Conclusion

Although the plan does not provide as comprehensive a rationale as requested, it is a huge step forward. The work on performance measurement continues. Legislative and Executive staff have compiled a long list of candidate measures, are reviewing these for validity and feasibility, and hope to have something to present to the Committee soon.

The North Precinct's representative from the City Attorney's Office had this timely bit of advice for us all:

What You Need To Know About Residential Sellers

By Ed McKenna

We're all familiar with residential sellers, also known as solicitors, traveling salespersons, or door-to-door salespersons. What you don't know about them however, might just hurt you.

I recently received a phone call from a family member of an elderly resident. The family member explained that the prior week, a solicitor knocked on the door, and proceeded to talk the elderly resident into an expensive burglar alarm system. The elderly resident signed a contract that not only provided for the installation of the alarm, but also included an expensive monitoring fee, far in excess of that normally charged by reputable alarm companies. What's more, the contract included expensive penalties for early termination and even costs for the removal of the alarm at the end of the contract. Was there a violation of the law in this situation? Probably not. What's that have to do with public safety? Plenty.

Most of us feel comfortable at our homes. Our homes are our castles, and many of us don't mind opening the castle gate to perfect strangers, whether they sell Scout cookies, magazines, newspapers, frozen steaks, brushes, vacuum cleaners, or alarm systems. Many are legitimate. Most are not. Some are simply dangerous. A quick Google search for "traveling sales crews" gives reason to pause before opening your door to strangers. Web titles such as "Magazine solicitor nabbed in sex case," "Magazine salesman assaults resident who refused purchase," "Salesmen suspected of burglary, forgery," "Magazine salesman convicted of assault," "Three arrested for deceptive sales," "Magazine salesman pleads guilty to rape." The list is endless. Like other major cities, Seattle also has its share of crime attributable to residential sellers. Just recently, an elderly Wedegwood resident was assaulted and home burglarized by two persons who claimed to be residential sellers.

Vanloads of sales persons travel the circuit through the United States. Each year, I'm told stories of crime attributable to some of these persons. Even when arrested, they simply bail out and skip town, never to be seen again to answer for their charges. Misdemeanor warrants are not extraditable, so even if arrested in another state, they won't be returned to Seattle. How do you know whether the solicitor at your door has a criminal history or is a wanted criminal suspect?

What can you do to protect yourself? Don't open your door to strangers is the obvious answer. Install a "peephole" so you can see who is at the door. If you don't recognize the person, either inquire of their business through the door or simply don't respond if you don't recognize the person. Most of us have signed up for the national "do not call list" so why should you have to listen to a sales pitch in your door. Fortunately, Seattle has a law designed to stop residential sellers before they pester you. Seattle Municipal Code section 6.260.050 provides that it is illegal to gain admittance to property for the purpose of selling at any residence bearing a sign stating "No Solicitors," "No Peddlers," or words of similar effect. If a solicitor violates the sign and continues on your property, it could constitute the crime of criminal trespass. Likewise, if you simply tell a solicitor to leave and they continue to try to sell, they are trespassing. Call 911 to report the incident.

Seattle has many other laws regulating residential sellers. For instance, sellers cannot sell

after 9:00 p.m., they may not make deceptive or untrue statements, and they must, with limited exceptions, possess a residential seller's license, or a residential seller's agent card issued by the City. Many solicitors carry flashy cards around their necks in an attempt to look official, but very few are legitimate. In fact, a recent check revealed only four businesses had licensed residential sellers in Seattle.

Let's say that you're caught in a moment of weakness and decide to purchase some snake oil from a door-to-door salesperson. After reflecting on the fast-talking salesperson and your lighter wallet, you decide you were taken advantage of. What can you do? Fortunately, there is some assistance. Under most circumstances, the law provides a 3-day cancellation period. You must cancel in writing no later than midnight of the third day after the sale, other wise you're on the hook and obligated to complete the transaction and pay the contracted amount. Of course, if you already ate those scout cookies, this provision doesn't apply.

For more information, contact the City's Revenue and Consumer Affairs Department at 684-8484.

(1) Exceptions include newspaper (not magazine) sellers, perishable food sellers (candy) utility agents, and home sales parties. Ed also had some things to say about the proposed "slum lord" ordinance currently being suggested for Seattle. As for "why" he suggests you all Google "Hugh Sisley and Keith Gilbert. Hugh is "the" Seattle north end slum lord and Keith Gilbert is.....just Google him and find out for yourself.

Following, is a letter that the Council accepted and agreed to send on to the City Council:

April 4, 2007

Dear Council Members:

As you know, the SPD North Precinct Advisory Council is made up of citizens and representatives from a wide variety of north-end business and community groups. Our goal is to foster better communication between the police and the public, and to increase public safety. We work closely with many other similar organizations throughout the City.

Please allow me to thank you for your budget vote last year in favor of adding more police officer positions. You heard the loud and growing voice from the community asking for more police officers. Many people in Seattle saw last years budget as a very good start towards raising the SPD staffing up to a more acceptable level. Your budget support for public safety is much appreciated and will not be forgotten.

This year, Mayor Nickels has proposed additional police officer positions, about 21 more in each of the next 5 years. We want you to know that we are whole-heartedly in favor of that proposal and we ask for your support to help make it happen. Also, an additional prosecutor in the City Attorney's Office would seem to be in order. We do understand that

these additional staff positions represent a significant amount of money but we also keep in mind that public safety is the paramount duty of City government. Last year the public spoke loud and clear about the need for more officers. The need has certainly not decreased. The members of NPAC wish to offer our support to you in furtherance of our common goal of increasing public safety in our fine City. Please don't hesitate to contact me or other members of NPAC if there is anything we can do for you to help make the Mayor's proposal a reality.

Sincerely,

Pete Rogerson

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