

City of Auburn
Public Safety and Community Services Council Committee Minutes

Wednesday, August 3, 2016

5:30 PM

Community Room – Auburn Hall

Present: Councilor Leroy Walker; Councilor Andrew Titus; Councilor David Young; Phil Crowell, Chief of Police; Geoff Low, Auburn Fire Chief; Mamie Anthoine Ney, Library Director.

Community Members: Larry Pelletier.

Excused: Phyllis Gamache, 911 Director.

Councilor Walker called the meeting to order:

*Meeting began at 5:30pm with Councilor Walker taking attendance.

Minutes from July 6, 2016 were reviewed. Motion by Councilor Titus and seconded by Councilor Young to accept minutes as written. No discussion. All were in favor to accept.

1. Community Safety Cameras

- Chief Crowell informed attendees that the purchase of community safety cameras was placed in the FY 2017 CIP budget. That line item was not approved.
- The APD is currently reviewing the RFP for the next round of MEMA (Maine Emergency Management Agency) Homeland Security funding. The APD receives direct funding from MEMA and is the fiscal agent for the grant that includes: Auburn Police, Auburn Fire, L/A 911 and the Andros County COBRA (Haz-Mat) Team.
- Representatives from these agencies have met and agree that surveillance cameras are a priority. Surveillance cameras are included in the list of MEMA approved items.
- We should hear back from MEMA by the end of September.
- Chief Crowell distributed a handout of the camera system that is being reviewed. Must have night (thermal) vision or the system will not be worth spending the money. Looking at "dome" cameras that will allow viewer to toggle and get multiple views – providing as much scanning as possible.
- Four (4) locations have tentatively been identified: Bonney Park, Gully/by-pass on Union Street, Main Street and Festival Plaza. We hope to be able to purchase at least 4.
- Next steps: will review specifications for available models, go out to bid, and meet with vendors.
- APD currently has access to a pole camera and placing it in strategic areas.

Councilor Young asked if we are taking funds from elsewhere/other needs and Chief Crowell stated that representatives meet to discuss the local priorities and agree on the list of items before sending out the grant application.

Councilor Young asked about the funding source and any required cash/in-kind match. Chief Crowell stated that MEMA has the equipment list that includes all the specs. This Homeland Security funding does not require a match from the City of Auburn.

Chief Low stated that these cameras will be useful for training purposes as well – in active shooter exercises or a mass casualty exercise at the airport. Councilor Young asked: who will watch these cameras? Chief Crowell stated while no one really monitors the cameras 24/7, supervisors will be able to go back and review footage. Currently, Dispatch and Watch Commanders monitor the parking garage.

Mr. Pelletier asked: If he finds graffiti in the morning, will we be able to go back on the previous day and find who committed the vandalism. Chief Crowell stated yes.

Councilor Titus: What is the cost for 4 cameras?

Chief Crowell: We anticipate that 4 cameras will cost approximately \$20,000.

Councilor Titus: Is this major cost because of video?

Chief Crowell: Yes, we will put on our servers. We have room.

Councilor Titus: How long would we keep the video?

Chief Crowell: We will need to check with IT – Paul Fraser.

Councilor Titus: Do we have room to put video of police body cameras on these servers as well?

Chief Crowell: Yes. However, body cam's have to be public and then outsourced to be scrubbed (and pictures/videos of juveniles has be blacked out).

Chief Crowell: FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) requests are asking for videos. Chief has spoken to other agencies – they are weighing options/costs. Still lots of research to be done. NO mandate to require the wearing of body cams. We should pause. We want to be able to tie into in-car camera system. Currently, when cruisers drive in – a box in the courtyard connects to the cruiser and ties the video to the server. No tampering of video. We must provide 3 copies of any video for the District Attorney/courts.

Councilor Titus: Are we looking at any additional costs?

Chief Crowell: No. However, it is possible that after the purchase we would need to pay an "annual maintenance agreement." We will have to wait until bids come in.

Councilor Titus: People want video cameras.

Chief Crowell: Lewiston has had cameras for quite a few years and have had good results.

Chief Crowell: Communities are now expected to have cameras everywhere. We have had issues – for instance at Gritty’s – where there was vandalism – the quality was grainy and we were not able to identify the suspects.

Chief Crowell: It is important to note that cameras are everywhere. If people feel they are being watched, it is a deterrent. Once we hear back from MEMA, we will let members of this committee know.

Mr. Pelletier: What about body cameras?

Chief Crowell: We are currently reviewing if there are any grants available. However, we need to keep in mind that any purchase of body cameras would require that the APD hire a part-time employee just to keep up with the reporting requirements.

Chief Crowell: Body cams may be mandatory later on. It’s important to keep in mind that you see “what the camera allows you to see based on the position of the officer and the camera”. There is lots of controversy.

Chief Crowell: The APD equipment committee will review the wearing of body cams. By mid-December, the committee will make a recommendation and cost will be placed in the FY 2018 CIP budget.

Mr. Pelletier: Cameras have been requested by the Recreation Dept. for many years. He is pleased that we are moving forward at looking into the purchase of cameras.

Chief Crowell: Will request the information from the Rec. Dept. to review what they had.

2. Fire Department – MOU’s (Memorandums of Understanding)

Chief Low stated that he did not have an exit meeting with Chief Roma and he is not clear on what is being asked from this committee regarding MOU’s. Councilor Walker would like a list of agencies that Auburn currently has “First Responder MOU’s” with as well as the actual MOU placed in the City Clerk’s office. He would like Chief Low guide us as to what agencies, equipment, etc. outside agencies can provide us in case of a mass disaster.

Councilor Titus stated that we have always had state-wide mutual aid agreements over and above what Lewiston/Auburn had. Now that we provide EMS services, what state-wide MOU agreement stand?

Chief Low stated that – in terms of Paramedic Intercept - we currently provide services/have an MOU with other agencies. All area agencies – Norway, Poland, Minot, Turner Rescue, all offer some level of services. Auburn goes to Lisbon to do back up – it is a longstanding practice. There is no mandate to do this – but from time to time – we do provide services. There is no umbrella document. Lewiston fires – all area agencies provided services – called in Norway and Portland. When we take our committed resources to Mechanic Falls (1 truck with 3 people), we get more back when they provide services to us. Chief Low will get a list from EMA in Lewiston and will work on official MOU’s.

Councilor Titus stated that this is where we want to go. Have an inventory of the apparatus within Androscoggin County. We want to cement what we will do and what equipment we have.

Chief Crowell stated that IT's Rosemary Mosher has worked with county with mapping system that shows where equipment. He will send the link to the committee for review.

Chief Crowell asked: APD currently has MOU's with the following agencies: Androscoggin County Sheriff's Office, Lewiston Police Department, Cumberland County Sheriff's Office and Maine State Police. Where would you like these documents to reside?

Councilor Walker: In the City Clerk's Office. Would like to be able to look at a link on the City Clerk's page.

Chief Crowell: Will follow up with City Clerk to see how she wants it done.

Councilor Titus: Not looking for a balance of what agencies have.

Chief Low: Not sure what other departments have but will ask. Will try to provide a 1-2 page document soon.

Chief Crowell: Currently have a Watch Commander document that lists: who is in charge,

Councilor Titus: Want to have a good understanding of who the most qualified person is in the area when there is an emergency.

Mr. Pelletier: How do you communicate when there is an emergency?

Chief Low: If Turner needs help – call goes to L/A 911 and then ASO will dispatch units.

Chief Crowell: Chiefs typically call each other and then notify 911 to change coverage. Chiefs can call out additional resources and the City Manager/Finance Director will authorize additional costs.

Chief Low: Will have a list available by end of year to ensure that all area agencies have signed on.

3. Street Lights

Chief Crowell stated that currently City Electrician DeAngelis and Economic & Community Development Deputy Director Cousens are on vacation. They will be in attendance at the next meeting.

Councilor Walker: Several years ago, due to budget cuts, we had some street lights turned off. Why can't we have some street lights back? Why is there no plan to turn them back on?

Chief Crowell: Back in 2010, a full scale map of all street lights was designed. This was presented during budget deliberations and what were going to be turned off in the new budget year. Police were involved in those deliberations/recommendations. Approximately 40 were turned off. There was a plan to either purchase or lease. Charlie and/or Eric will be able to explain.

Councilor Titus: Where does process to re-install start?

Chief Crowell: Process starts with police department, then city electrician. He reviews cost(s) to see what is available in the budget. Sometimes, those requests go directly to the City Manager's office. FYI – hard to know if some have actually been turned off or are on a timed delay.

Councilor Titus: Were there any requests to re-install last year?

Chief Crowell: Yes, more than a half dozen.

Councilor Young: There are 3 lights out on Poland Road. There have been accidents – now they are back on.

Chief Crowell: Yes, sometimes requests to “take out the lights” come to the police dept. as well.

Councilor Titus: Should there be a minimum amount of lighting?

Chief Crowell: How much light pollution do we want? There are new studies out there – some houses have own lights. Park Avenue is overkill. Some streets have been neglected.

Councilor Titus: LED's – one plan – how can we improve for everyone?

Chief Crowell: Ask for additional funds in next budget. An example – Main Street – LED lights are a great improvement.

Councilor Walker: City Electrician to let us know update of progress on new installations/projects.

Councilor Young: There is money to be saved if lights are leased – but we would be responsible for changing out the burned light bulbs.

Councilor Walker: We still have to pay for those lights.

Councilor Titus: Thought we could pay less but CMP said no. We need to hear more from Eric Cousens.

Chief Crowell: We will get full report at next meeting from Eric and Charlie.

4. OTHER

Library Director Ney stated that they have been very busy at the library. Summer reading program is coming to an end. They have had three (3) changes in personnel. They will contract with a bookkeeper. The NASA exhibit is now gone. MSL (Maine State Library) is the next grant they will work on.

Councilor Walker stated that the sign on the front lawn is over 10 years old – sometimes it goes on/off. It will fail eventually. Director Ney agreed that they need a new one – especially since it only catches motorists/pedestrians who are coming UP Court Street – not those going down. She stated that they do change when there is a significant event, but the capability is limited. Councilor Walker stated that Republic Jewelry is looking to replace their sign as lightning struck it and perhaps we might want to see what it would entail to connect to the library.

Director Ney stated that some of the costs of the current sign were donated by Neocraft Signs years ago. Councilor Walker stated that he would like to see what it will cost to get a new one. Chief Crowell stated that we do have an ordinance re: illuminating rate. Message can't change too fast – or stay too long. Some businesses had to adjust theirs.

Director Ney wanted to share “kudos to the Auburn Police Department for National Night Out”. It was a great event. The library and other community agency displays were set up differently and the flow was much better. Great job to all staff. Chief Crowell thanked all staff for their support and also to the Fire Department for all their apparatus. Director Ney stated that it is difficult for the library to host events given the limited number of staff they have. It is important to do a display whenever they can and NNO is the perfect opportunity.

Councilor Walker agreed that there was great support and a great event. He would like to see one in New Auburn. Chief Crowell said that the goal is to have a “block party” for each of the “neighborhood watch” groups. Each one could be different and include area businesses. Councilor Walker agreed that we need more of this in our community.

Chief Crowell stated that there is lots of media/press nationally for NNO. We set out a poster for people to sign “What I love about Auburn”. Poster will be placed in Council Chambers for everyone to see and then will post at the library.

Councilor Titus stated that there needs to be more 1 on 1. Fire and Rec want to participate in the block parties too. Councilor Walker said that the neighborhood watch group colored T-shirts were great. Participants in these groups were proud to wear them.

Director Ney said it is easier for larger department to spearhead these types of events. Councilor Walker stated that he wants to start working on the “Santa parade” earlier this year. Director Ney said that “Baxter” will be coming too.

Chief Crowell stated that Congressman Bruce Poliquin will be hosting a Lewiston/Auburn Heroin Epidemic forum at Central Maine Community College on August 16th from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

Mr. Pelletier stated that he has concerns re: crosswalk at Rooper’s on Maine Street. He has spoken to Lt. Harrington and Public Services Director Dan Goyette. A center island is needed. PS Director Goyette has said that it is not possible to place one there. Mr. Pelletier stated that the one in front of Central Maine Medical Center works very well. We need to do something. It is very dangerous. Can we put a sign out there?

Chief Crowell stated that the "Stop for ME" Campaign is coming soon – in preparation for the opening of another school year. He stated that we may be a need for an "overhead blinking light". Because of the large amount of pedestrian traffic, the Town of Camden has a "STOP – LOOK – WAVE" sign on every entrance to the crosswalk. It is a "change of mindset".

Councilor Walker said that the safety island is the right idea as a lady in a wheelchair almost got hit. Need to move it forward and revisit with Dan Goyette. Chief Crowell will speak to Lt. Harrington and Dan Goyette. Director Ney stated that "right hand turns" are bad in that area.

Next Meeting: September 7, 2016 5:30pm Auburn Hall Community Room

Motion to adjourn meeting at 7:45pm: Councilor Young
Motion seconded by: Councilor Titus
All were in favor.

Respectfully submitted: Rita Beaudry