



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING
Monday, June 3, 2013**

The Public Safety Commission convened in a regular meeting on Monday, June 3, 2013 at City Hall, 301 West 2nd Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair Michael Lauderdale, called the Board Meeting to order at 4:06 PM.

Board Members in Attendance:

Kim Rossmo
Michael Lauderdale
Michael Levy
Kent Anschutz
Ramey Ko (present beginning at 4:14 PM)
Sam Holt

Board Members not in Attendance:

Reynaldo Moreno

1. Approval of Minutes

- a. The minutes for the regular meeting on 3/04/2013 were approved on Commissioner Holt's motion, Commissioner Anschutz second and a 5-0 vote with Commissioners Moreno and Ko not present.

2. Citizen Communications

Scott Johnson reiterated his earlier concerns to the Commission about distracted driving, particularly the use of mobile communication devices while driving. Mr. Johnson suggested that Bianca Bentzin of the Legal Department speak to the Commission about proposed changes to the existing ordinance. Vice Chair Levy shared an article from Consumer Reports about the dangers of Distracted Driving with him. Chair Lauderdale requested that APD provide the Commission with a report in July or August on distracted driving and include City Legal in the discussion.

3. Discussion and Possible Action Items

- a. Continuing Discussion of Austin Police Department Staffing Needs
Agenda items 3a and 3b were taken up together.

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Assistant Chief Brian Manley provided the Commission with an overview of FY13-14 cost drivers: health insurance, the projected increase in the 47 officers required to meet the 2:1,000 minimum, the interlocal booking agreement with Travis County and overtime costs associated with special events. Assistant Chief Manley also offered a summary about Austin's low rate of violent crime, the ongoing problems with property crime, concerns about the Department's response time to hot shot/urgent calls for service, challenges associated with the lack of uncommitted time for officers and the impact of that on community policing, and expected departmental revenue decreases. He spoke about several Capital Improvement Projects underway including a new mounted patrol facility, a new northwest substation and a facility to be jointly shared with the Parks and Recreation Department. Assistant Chief Manley provided business justification for an additional 45 officers based on the findings of the PERF report and the growing coverage needs throughout the City. Chair Lauderdale raised the issue of the 24 hour trail pilot program and how that will affect the Department's staffing needs. Assistant Chief Manley replied that the Department will determine staffing needs based on the findings of the pilot program. Chief Acevedo clarified reports that the Austin Police Department requested the PERF study, stating that the Council was the requesting body. He also verified his approach for calculating the Department's FY13-14 staffing needs with PERF Researches to ensure that he was calculating departmental staffing needs using the same methodology applied in the official PERF report; he received confirmation that he was employing their assessment method correctly. Chief Acevedo warned of the increasing responsibilities and safety concerns falling to the Austin Police Department as the City continues to grow. Vice Chair Rossmo returned to the subject of the changing nature of Austin and the impact on local police. The Chief agreed that the Department must continue to be a data-driven organization and grow those capabilities by using tools like Business Intelligence Software. He also emphasized that beyond data, there must be sworn bodies to respond to call for service, follow through in the criminal justice system, and a change in the permissive attitude towards crime among many in the community. Chief voiced his concerns about property crime and traffic fatalities in the community and offered examples of the Department's data-driven response to those trends. Vice Chair Levy raised questions about the impact of special event revenue to fund policing and requested the Department provide Vice Chair Rossmo with the budget request backup to show justification for the requested staff and funding. Vice Chair Rossmo suggested that the Commission look into alternative funding for the Department and expand the purview of the board to look at the entire criminal justice process rather than solely the policing aspect. Commissioner Anschutz offered a perspective about focusing police resources on crimes with victims versus crimes considered victimless. Commissioner Ko remarked that public safety is a comprehensive issue and investing in other services may lessen the workload on police. Commissioner Holt suggested that APD consider alternative tools to address property crime. Chair Lauderdale and Chief Acevedo discussed drug-related crime, particularly as it relates to Mexico and Latin America and drug trafficking organizations as well as larger security issues associated with the City's growth. Vice Chair Levy and Chair Lauderdale requested a copy of APD's budget requests so the Commission can take it up as a resolution. Vice Chair Rossmo pointed out the relatively small number of additional officers being requested by the Austin Police

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Department in the coming fiscal year. He will work with Chair Lauderdale to build a business justification and draft a resolution supporting APD budget requests.

Barry Lewis of the Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association (DANA) offered support of the Austin Police Department's FY13-14 budget request for additional sworn personnel. Mr. Lewis spoke about the success of the Public Order Initiatives downtown, but voiced concern about the use of overtime funding to facilitate the operation. Mr. Lewis also raised the issue of public perception of safety downtown and emphasized the effect that uniformed officers have on increasing that. Vice Chair Levy and Commissioner Ko discussed their observations about recent crime trends in the overall downtown area and this led to a request that APD present the Commission with data about recent downtown crime developments. Commissioner Rossmo and Chief Manley will work together to define a scope of work and specific questions about the issue for analysis by APD staff. Chief Manley will then work with Chair Lauderdale to schedule the item.

Lisa Hinely, Chair of the North Lamar Neighborhood Team, encouraged the Austin Police Department to work with the community rather than for the community. She also expressed disappointment that the PERF study had not led to more discussion about community policing. Commissioner Holt asked about APD's community engagement efforts. Vice Chair Rossmo requested specifics from Ms. Hinely about how better the Austin Police Department could address the neighborhood's concerns.

Bill Brice of the Downtown Austin Alliance addressed violent crime in the Downtown Improvement District and the Austin Police Department's efforts to combat it. He spoke in support of APD's request for additional resources to suppress crime and to manage the growth in the downtown area, both in population and in the number of events. Vice Chair Levy requested clarification about the boundaries of the Downtown Improvement District and requested a memo with information about downtown growth and specific public safety recommendations for the Commission to consider. Commander Jason Dusterhoft provided the Commission with an overview of downtown operations and the resources required to conduct initiatives. Vice Chair Levy suggested Commander Dusterhoft work with Mr. Brice on the memo. Vice Chair Rossmo raised the idea of planning for future policing needs based on the changing nature of Austin. Chair Lauderdale requested that Chief Manley work towards specific needs based on the dynamic nature of both downtown issues and city-wide concerns.

Mary Arnett, Del Goss, Mary Rudig and Susan Reed all signed up to speak or donate time on 3b (Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Departmental Budget Presentation by the Austin Police Department), but time did not permit them to make comments.

b. Fiscal Year 2013-2014 Departmental Budget Presentation by Austin Police Department
Agenda items 3a and 3b were taken up together.

c. Continuing Discussion of Austin Fire Department Budget Requests

Chief of Staff Harry Evans reemphasized the Austin Fire Department's need for additional staff to support fire prevention efforts in the Special Events Division referring to the unprecedented growth in Austin. He also spoke about the need for two Lieutenants to move forward with Phase II of the Wildfire Division development. Chief Evans updated the Commission on the faster than expected development of the Wildfire Division, explaining that funding was awarded to the Department mid-year rather than at the beginning of the

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following fiscal year allowing the hiring process for staff to begin earlier. Additionally, the Austin Fire Department is requesting conversion of ten temporary administrative staff members to permanent status. Prompted by comments from Vice Chair Levy and his proposed resolution language, Assistant Director Jim Linardos remarked about the important work the AFD Wildfire Division's Environmental Program Coordinator is doing by forming burn and prescription strategies, the Division's plans for an additional Specialist Senior starting in July at which time the Division will be at full force for Phase I. Citing the risks associated with prescribed fires, Vice Chair Levy proceeded with his request for a policy change that would eliminate Parks and Recreation Department and Austin Water Utility from participating in fuel mitigation initiatives and suggested that AFD is currently in talks with those two departments to remove them from fire suppression operations and is working to transfer all resources associated with that activity to the Austin Fire Department.

Chief Evans responded with an update on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was created to define the responsibilities of the Austin Fire Department and the Austin Water Utility as they relate to prescribed burns. Chief Evans went on to provide an overview of the process for carrying out a prescribed burn: the Wildfire Administrator is required to review all prescribed burn plans; the Fire Marshall is then required to permit the prescribed burn. At the burn site, the number of Austin Firefighters will be equal to or greater than the holding force (the force required to sustain that fire inside its boundaries) to monitor the process. Vice Chair Levy referenced a conversation Commission Moreno had with the Chief of the Colorado Springs Fire Service in which the Chief emphasized the dangers of having non-fire service agencies should not participate in conducting prescribed burns. Association President Bob Nicks echoed Vice Chair Levy's support of installing a Battalion Chief in the Division. President Nicks responded to a question from Commission Ko about the qualifications required for and the timeline of hiring a Battalion Chief to serve in the Wildfire Division. Vice Chair Levy brought up the matter of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Assistant Director Linardos updated the Commission about the public meetings held to gather input about the plan and the anticipated completion of the draft plan in September. Commissioner Ko stressed the importance of reaching out to Austin's diverse community, particularly non-English speaking residents. Assistant Director Linardos outlined the steps AFD has taken to communicate with the various segments of the Austin population including translating Ready-Set-Go into Spanish and using city and county resources to encourage people to attend meetings with media blitzes. Chief Linardos invited Commissioners to offer additional ideas about the best ways to reach members of the Austin Community. Commission Ko responded with suggestions to utilize the City's various cultural centers and to work with APD's Community Liaisons. Vice Chair Levy introduced the last point of his proposed resolution that focuses on the International Wild Land Interface Code. Chief Evans provided the Commission with a progress report that indicated AFD's previous work on the International Wild Land Interface Code is on hold until the Department can clearly define risk through the implementation of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and then proceed with work on the Code. The resolution supporting the efforts of the Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Division was approved unanimously on Vice Chair Levy's motion and Commissioner Ko's second with Commissioner Moreno

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absent. After the vote, Chair Levy requested that Chief Evans come back to the Commission during the summer to provide ballpark costs for all of the Department's unmet needs. Vice Chair Levy then requested a timeline from AFD about items specifically endorsed through the resolution. The resolution is as follows:

Resolution with Recommendations Regarding Wildland Fire Risk in Austin

Based on the testimony to this commission by several respected experts on this subject, including officials of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (charged with the management of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge) and the Texas Forest Service, this commission makes the following recommendations to the Austin City Council:

- 1) Increasing pace of dialogue with stakeholders in environmental community to develop appropriate plan for fuel mitigation that can begin being implemented as soon as possible, with resources necessary for this effort including an experienced environmental compliance specialist.
- 2) Because it has been seen in several incidents nationally that non-firefighting agencies attempting vegetative fuel mitigation efforts have ignited major fires resulting in significant loss of lives and property, it is imperative that all such efforts by City of Austin agencies other than the Austin Fire Department (such as the Austin Water Utility and the Austin Parks and Recreation Department) must be put under the direct risk assessment and operational control of the Austin Fire Department, with personnel and equipment being used by these non-AFD agencies for wildfire related activities be re-assigned to the Austin Fire Department to allow it to meet the department's un-met needs related to wildfire prevention and suppression in the 2013-2014 budget as currently proposed.
- 3) AFD be given sufficient funding to allow: a) The purchase of protective clothing and equipment for its personnel; b) The training of its personnel in the methodology of wildland firefighting; c) The ability to bring in off duty personnel when the National Weather Service declares a "Red Flag Warning" so that additional firefighters are immediately available to attack emerging fires; d) Funding in AFD's wildfire division for a Battalion Chief position that is necessary for appropriate command structure.
- 4) AFD be given the authority to develop and implement a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). The plan will clarify and refine the City's wildland fire risk and priorities, and will address in detail critical elements such as wildland fire response, risk assessment by area, hazard mitigation, community preparedness and structure protection. (Most structures can have increased fire "resistance", but cannot be made "fireproof".) Five key resource areas will be guided by the CWPP and AFD's wildfire mitigation: 1) Public Education, with special efforts to reach Austin's multiple non-English speaking populations through the City's various cultural centers and with assistance from the Austin Police Department's Cultural Liaisons; 2) Communications with the public, officials, and other agencies to assure the success of any plans (which include evacuation planning in coordination with the Austin Police Department); 3) Environmentally appropriate fuel mitigation efforts; 4) Training; 5) Regional response plans and coordination.

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- 5) The adoption of the International Wildland Interface Code (IWUIC) with modifications recommended by AFD, containing provisions addressing fire spread, accessibility, defensible space, water supply, etc., for all buildings located in or near wildland areas.

5. Discussion Regarding Potential Future Agenda Items

Early Crime Intervention Programs

Mental Health Services

Alternative Funding for Police Services

Continued Discussion about APD Budget Requests for FY13-14

Distracted Driving Legislation

Downtown Crime Trends

EMS Interlocal Agreement

Continued Discussion about EMS Budget Requests for FY13-14

6. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Holt, seconded by Commissioner Ko. Meeting adjourned at 6:02 PM.