

City of New Haven
Meeting Minutes (Short)
Public Safety Committee

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Wednesday, April 1, 2009

6:00 PM

Aldermanic Chambers

ALDERMANIC NOTICE - NEW HAVEN

The Public Safety Committee of the New Haven Board of Aldermen will hold a public hearing at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 1 in the Aldermanic Chamber of City Hall, 165 Church St., re

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION TO AND ACCEPTANCE OF \$2,300 FROM THE WALMART FOUNDATION FOR THE PURCHASE OF A DOG TO ASSIST POLICE IN NARCOTICS INVESTIGATIONS.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE APPLICATION TO AND ACCEPTANCE OF \$43,241 FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, 2009 GANG RESISTANCE EDUCATION AND TRAINING (G.R.E.A.T.) GRANT PROGRAM, TO IMPLEMENT A MIDDLE SCHOOL GANG PREVENTION CURRICULUM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

These items are on file and available for public inspection in the Office of the City Clerk, Room 202, 200 Orange Street, New Haven. Per order: Alexander Rhodeen, Chairman; attest: Ronald Smith, City Clerk.

For a disability-related accommodation, please call 946-6483 (V) or 946-8582 (TTY) at least one business day prior to the meeting.

Meeting Minutes

MINUTES

Public Safety Committee
April 1, 2009

Chairman Alexander Rhodeen called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber. Present were Alderpersons DePino, Antunes, Lehtonen, and Paolillo.

(1) Resolution from the Chief Administrative Officer requesting approval for public access restrictions to the Pitkin Tunnel to improve public safety.

Appearing on behalf were Rob Smuts, CAO; Richard Miller, city engineer; and Gary Dorsey and David Dimmite, US Marshals.

Smuts said the city began to look at security enhancements following the 9-11 attacks. The Board of Aldermen has already authorized installation of gates and barriers in the tunnel and limiting access to it at night. The new legislation authorizes limited access to the tunnel between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Miller said personnel who need to pass through the gates will have key cards, including police and fire department.

Dorsey said closing the tunnel from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. will provide optimum security. Studies have shown the tunnel to be an extreme security risk. The barriers have also reduced the problem of parking in areas of the tunnel where it is not authorized.

Smuts explained that the tunnel entrances will be unlimited from 6 a.m. to 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. during prime commuting hours.

The U.S. Marshals will have discretionary authority to restrict the tunnel further for periods of up to a month. After that, they will have to come back to the Board of Aldermen, Smuts said.

(2) Resolution from the Chief of Police authorizing the application to and acceptance of \$2,300 from the Wal-Mart Foundation for the purchase of a dog to assist police in narcotics investigations.

Appearing on behalf were Assistant Chief Stephanie Redding and police grants planner Carolyn Bove.

It was noted that the Milk Bone portion of the police dog funding was already approved by the Board of Aldermen.

(3) Resolution from the Chief of Police authorizing the application to and acceptance of \$43,241 from the U. S. Department of Justice to implement a middle school gang prevention curriculum in the public schools as part of the 2009 Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Grant Program.

Redding and Bove remained at the table, and were joined by Sergeant Ricardo Rodriguez. Bove said there is a required 10 percent local match to the grant, but it

will be covered by the New Haven Public Schools with an in-kind contribution. The Gang Resistance Educational Training is a six-week program, Rodriguez said. It is currently at Woodward and Betsy Ross schools. It teaches the kids responsibility. More officers will be certified to teach the course as part of the grant, and then it will expand to other schools. The program will be opened to officers other than school resource officers.

(4) From Alderpersons S. Rodriguez, Clark and Edmonds-Sepulveda submitting an order requesting that the Chief of Police provide reports on the New Haven Gun Project and/or any successor programs to combat the deadly epidemic of youth gun violence.

Police Chief James Lewis and Assistant Chief Roy Brown came to the table. Lewis distributed former Chief Ortiz's policy on how guns acquired by the police department are handled. He said guns come into New Haven in a variety of ways. They may be stolen, or bought on the street. He said guns do not have much history, meaning there is not good recordkeeping on all previous owners of a gun.

Shootings are still up, Lewis said. Violence levels here are high. It has slowed down a little recently, but has been pretty even for several years. He discussed how the SeeClickFix web site led to an arrest of a drug dealer on Orange St. There was a discussion of various law enforcement issues. In response to Ald. Antunes, he discussed the asset forfeiture program. They recently used it to purchase laptops for district managers and some vehicles, as well as some rifles and Tasers.

The chair asked how the chief would rate their efforts at violence so far. The chief responded: pretty good, about what was expected. Violence here is about three times the national average. He said traffic tickets are up 72 percent. The police are focusing on quality-of-life crimes. A class of new officers graduated from the academy. There are issues on data collection that they are working on. They are several years behind in reporting to a national crime data base. Some data is dramatically off. They hope to have most of these issues resolved during the summer.

The chair asked Brown how his revisions of policies are going. He said the bulk of the policy manual needs to be brought up to date. The laws have changed on strip searches, for example, so the policies need to be revised. They are also updating pursuit policies. He hopes to have this done by the fall. In a week or so, he hopes to send drafts to Corporation Counsel for review. He also wants union input.

In response to a question from Ald. Paolillo regarding traffic enforcement, he said the police union contract does not allow traffic officers to work past 6 p.m. at night. This needs to be changed. The union seems amenable but wants to settle the contract first. There was a discussion of crime statistics and why they may vary from period to period.

There was a discussion of quality control. The police are working on studies where a call to the police is tracked from the first call to final disposition. They are also hoping for more academy classes in order to reduce overtime. They want new crime investigation software.

In response to Antunes, Lewis said some hard decisions may have to be made regarding improvement of the communications center. There is a lot of work to do. The chief said he would prefer to have civilians only. This dispatch area needs more training. Brown said the SeeClickFix web site is proving to be quite effective.

Lewis said the Taser data requested by the committee will not be available until next month.

COMMITTEE ACTION:

(1) Pitkin Tunnel: On a motion by Paolillo, duly seconded, the committee voted by voice to issue a favorable report.

(2) Wal-Mart grant: On a motion by Paolillo, seconded by Lehtonen, the committee voted by voice to issue a favorable report.

(3) GREAT grant: On a motion by Paolillo, seconded by Antunes, the committee voted by voice to issue a favorable report.

(4) Gun reports. No action.

Adjourn: 7:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Mercier
Legislative Aide