



Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting
Hemet Public Library- 1st Floor Meeting Room
Thursday, June 28, 2012 - 3:30 PM

AGENDA RECAP

1. Call to Order- Chairman Dan Goodrich

Chair Dan Goodrich called the meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

Staff Present: Police Chief Dave Brown
Community Development Director Deanna Elliano
Assistant City Manager Mark Orme
City Attorney Eric Vail

CAC Present: Jim Connell Gary Fowler Eva Gifford
John Gifford Daniel Goodrich Frank Gorman
Mona Groff Connie Hall Linda Krupa
Norm Kyriss Mary Ann Mari Robert Masson
Sharon McComb Stefany Nelson Michael Ramirez
Larry Smith Valerie Velez

CAC Absent: Patty Drusky Eric Gosch

2. Comments or corrections to the May 24th CAC Agenda Recap (distributed via e-mail to CAC members)- Chairman Dan Goodrich and CAC members

CAC Member Valerie Velez clarified that under the Hemet Unified School District report, 28,000 students should be changed to 20,000, and that the survey went to grades 5,7,9 and 11 rather than grades 4 and 6.

It was MOVED by Larry Smith, SECONDED by Michael Ramirez, and unanimously agreed to approve the May 24, 2012 Hemet ROCS Agenda Recap with the noted modifications.

3. Informational Reports & CAC Discussion Topics:

a. Panhandling – Police Chief Dave Brown

Police Chief Dave Brown advised the CAC that panhandling was a matter that continued to be a problem in the City. He explained that passive panhandling includes asking for money, which was generally not a criminal or police matter. Aggressive panhandling, on the other hand, is prohibited, and includes accosting, nagging, hounding, obstructing, harassing and/or physical contact. Local ordinances clarify and restrict panhandling, but the issue is one of enforcement. Panhandling is a supply and demand issue that is driven by the economy. If we can cut the supply by encouraging people not to contribute, it would help curb the problem, but it is hard to roll out this mindset into the community. Chief Brown opened the discussion to the Hemet ROCS CAC.

Vice Chair Connie Hall: Noted that the panhandling problem was spread throughout the valley and not exclusive to the City of Hemet.

Chair Goodrich: Asked what could be done about retailers who have panhandlers on private property.

Chief Brown: Responded that the police should be called if it was a persistent problem.

Chair Goodrich: Asked who should call...the store or the public?

Chief Brown: Responded that a call from either would suffice. It takes the community or the public to help bring the issue to the attention of the Police Department.

Discussion ensued regarding panhandling and the fact that if people refrained from giving panhandlers money, the problem would cease, or at the very least, decrease.

Frank Gorman: Noted that his wife had recently been approached by a panhandler, and asked if it was becoming an epidemic.

Chief Brown: Stated that this was a question for the community, noting that the police probably only hear about ten percent of the panhandling that occurs throughout the City.

Vice Chair Hall: Suggested that it was difficult to go the grocery store or any other shopping center in the City without being approached by a panhandler. She noted that

she had been in Nashville recently, and that they have a system to discourage people from giving money to panhandlers.

City Attorney Vail: Advised that commercial retailers could hire security, which would discourage panhandlers. Private property owners have a better ability to ask a panhandler to vacate the area than the City does, and if they have asked them to do so, and the panhandler refuses, the police can then be called and the panhandler can be arrested for trespassing.

Chair Goodrich: Noted that most shopping plazas have CC&R's.

City Attorney Vail: Indicated that more than just CC&R's would be necessary to curtail the problem. There should be "No loitering" signs, etc., installed.

CDD Elliano: Wondered if the centers that had security patrolling their sites tended to have less of a problem than those who do not.

Frank Gorman: Suggested that contacting the store owner/manager directly to express concern regarding a panhandling problem in their center might be helpful.

Mark Orme: Advised that his mother had been recently dealing with some panhandling issues in the community that she lives in, and she had reached out to the business owner regarding the matter. This particular Stater Bros. center now has a security guard patrolling the center, and the store has their employees accompany shoppers to their cars to help prevent them from being approached by panhandlers.

Mona Groff: Was told by the manager of the Stater Bros. on Stetson Avenue that they will soon have security in place to assist with the panhandling problem.

Michael Ramirez: Wondered how other communities are handling the issue.

Chair Goodrich: Inquired regarding how other agencies, such as the City of San Jacinto and Riverside County, were dealing with the problem.

John Gifford: Asked if the City of Hemet should implement their own ordinances for panhandling, and if there was any way to strengthen the existing ordinances.

City Attorney Vail: Responded that while the limit of the law had been met with the existing panhandling ordinances, other ways of dealing with the issue could be explored.

CDD Elliano: Noted that most of the panhandling issues were occurring on private property, and that the City's ability to enforce the existing ordinances was on public property, unless someone is accosted. Part of the problem is that businesses cannot allow some solicitors (such as Girl Scouts) to be on their property, and say no to others,

so what some retailers have chosen to do to resolve the issue is prohibit all solicitors from utilizing their property.

Stefany Nelson: Wondered how many of the panhandlers were also homeless.

Discussion ensued.

CAC Liaison Larry Smith: What approach does a police officer take to a panhandler?

Chief Brown: If someone gets to the point of calling the police we already know that it's gone beyond the panhandler just asking for money. The responding officer will usually engage the panhandling suspect in conversation and check their identification. In order for the police action to be effective, the person calling the police regarding the issue must be amenable to following through.

Frank Gorman: Noted that the increase in panhandling had been quite noticeable recently. He asked Chief Brown if he believed it was because more "undesirables" were coming into the city, or if it could be because the panhandlers are profiting, and then sharing that information with their friends who decide to profit as well.

Chief Brown: Responded that it was hard to say exactly what the causative issue was, but he believes it is more than an economic one. As long as the community continues to tolerate the panhandling, it will continue to occur. He added that he could not suggest that it was a factor of the community being poor, but more of a factor that they can get away with it.

Vice Chair Hall: Advised that Central County United Way had recently had an influx of calls from people needing resources. I quiz them to find out what their situation is and how they ended up here. Many have only been here for a short time and have come to the valley because they have family here, or the rent is affordable. It is now getting to a point in this valley where it is unsafe, and the community needs to step up to the plate and help be part of the solution.

Mona Groff: Suggested that the Valley Chronicle and Press Enterprise be utilized to address the topic and reach out to the community.

Member of the Public (identified as Tom Wilson): Stated that he would like to speak on the issue during the public comments section of the agenda.

b. Shopping Carts – Community Development Director Deanna Elliano and Public Works Director Kris Jensen

CDD Elliano addressed the issue of abandoned shopping carts throughout the City, and the fact that this had been an ongoing problem for a very long time. She advised that

the City's Code Enforcement unit had recently stepped up their efforts in dealing with this issue, with the help of the Public Works Department. She described what was currently being done, what the plan for the future was, and how the City was getting to that point. To the extent that their workload will allow, Police are stopping people who are wheeling shopping carts throughout the City. Code Enforcement is also approaching people with shopping carts, in a non-confrontational manner, and passing out cards that warn of the \$125 fine that could be imposed on them. When it reaches a point that people have left shopping carts on the streets and curbs all over town, that is when Public Works steps in and picks up the carts. A weekly sweep is now being done, and 350 shopping carts were picked up during the month of May, while over 200 were picked up during the first three weeks of June.

She went on to explain that once a cart has been impounded, the City is required by State law to notify the retailer that their cart or carts have been picked up. If the retailers pick up their carts within five days they are not required to pay a fine. After five days, the City can charge them a single fee of \$50, regardless of the number of carts collected (per state law). She explained the process that had been implemented to work within these constraints. When the City picks up retailer carts we contact the retailer directly and advise them that only the retailer – not the retrieval company they've often hired – can come to retrieve their carts from the City yard. She explained the provisions of the Shopping Cart Containment Plan (SCCP) that had been distributed to every retailer within the City that utilizes shopping carts, and what the requirements of the Plan included. We are hopeful that implementation of the SCCP, over time, will help resolve the problem of shopping carts being abandoned on city streets.

Maryann Mari: Stated that what seemed to be the most effective method of shopping cart theft prevention are the poles that prevent the carts from being removed from the stores.

CDD Elliano: Now that we've created a database, we can more closely monitor the number of carts that are being abandoned and collected for individual retailers.

Discussion ensued regarding the City's efforts to resolve the shopping cart problem.

John Gifford: Stated that he felt the City had done all that they could to rectify the problem of abandoned shopping carts, and that the only solution left was to approach the people who were taking the carts from the centers. I understand that this is not something the Police Department wants to tackle, but really think that if they start approaching these people and running their ID's, etc., that eventually they will find another way to transport their things.

Frank Gorman: Wondered how much of the City's staff time was being devoted to this. It seems like all of these things – shopping carts, panhandling, etc. – must be imposing a great cost to the City.

CDD Elliano: Advised that it was indeed a significant amount of staff time, but not unworthy of attention.

Chair Goodrich: Asked if there was a way to get a hotline going that the public could call regarding the abandoned shopping carts.

Public Works Director Kris Jensen: Explained that this would work for some retailers, as the hotline would be linked to one retrieval company – the largest one – but that when that company comes across the carts of companies that do not have a contract with them, they would not be able to retrieve those carts.

Frank Gorman: Inquired regarding how long it would be before the SCCP requirement started to make a noticeable difference.

CDD Elliano: Explained that the retailers have until July 12th to return the SCCP's. Our goal is to work with the retailers, and the biggest part of this effort is to get their attention and let them know that this is a problem that must be resolved. She advised how the SCCP would provide staff with the correct information regarding who to contact at the various stores.

Frank Gorman: Suggested that most of the panhandlers are at the grocery stores and gas stations, and that maybe the panhandling and shopping cart issue could be handled concurrently.

Discussion ensued regarding steps that could be taken to resolve these issues, including having police officers stop people that they see with shopping carts on the streets.

Chief Brown: Advised that police officers have approximately six minutes per hour to deal with items that are not a part of their regular schedule. It would be very difficult to get the officers to use those six minutes to make these discretionary stops.

c. Graffiti Removal–Public Works Director Kris Jensen

Public Works Director Kris Jensen advised the CAC regarding the current program for graffiti removal within the City. She explained that the City is contracted with Valley Wide Recreation and Parks District to provide graffiti removal, and that there were no City staff members designated to deal with this issue. While the city crews do handle our own parks and graffiti within the right-of-way areas that are on public property, graffiti on private property will warrant a call to the graffiti hotline, which is checked twice per day. Valley Wide has a single staff member that deals with this matter. The thing to know about graffiti removal, for those of us who don't have to do it, is that when you go out to do the removal – depending upon the type of material that the graffiti is on – sometimes you can abate the graffiti immediately, but sometimes you have to match the paint and utilize other materials, so it can often take awhile to successfully remove the

graffiti. Since school has been out, we have seen quite an increase in the amount of graffiti throughout the City. If we find that the public is not getting a response, we will deal with this, but most of the time Valley Wide does an excellent job at removing the City's graffiti.

Mona Groff: Inquired regarding the difference between the right-of-way and private property.

Public Works Director Jensen: Explained that lightpoles, easements, etc. – generally what is directly adjacent to the street – is considered right-of-way.

CDD Elliano: Explained that properties that are vacant or abandoned are generally taken care of by Code Enforcement as part of the property abatement program, for which the cost is charged back to the property owner. If the property is occupied, however, Code Enforcement cannot go onto their property to deal with the problem without permission. Instead they would have to notify the property owner and go through those channels.

Jim Connell: Discussed the idea kids who have been assigned to community service being utilized for graffiti removal through the court system.

City Attorney Vail: Noted that this could be done, but it is often difficult to track down the taggers.

CAC Liaison Smith: Asked if the message was being passed along to the Police Department regarding calls that come in for graffiti that is determined to be gang-related, so that the police can be apprised of what may be infecting different areas.

Public Works Director Jensen: Responded that Valley Wide provides information on a monthly basis regarding the graffiti that they have removed, and it is passed along to the Police Department as well as to herself. She noted for informational purposes that the graffiti hotline number was 951-765-2309.

Frank Gorman: Noted that he'd been on the Valley Wide Board for six years, and that the budget for graffiti had gone from approximately \$6,000 to over \$30,000. This is an important matter to Valley Wide, as our parks get hit a lot and we don't want them blighted just as we don't want the community blighted.

Public Works Director Jensen: Commended Valley Wide's response to graffiti calls.

Michael Ramirez: Wondered if volunteers could help with this.

CAC Liaison Linda Krupa: Mentioned that graffiti has tripled since school has been out, and that there has been consideration of bringing on temporary help for the summer to deal with the issue.

Discussion ensued regarding the matter of graffiti and possible solutions.

4. CAC Roundtable - CAC Chair & Committee Members

(CAC Roundtable is the opportunity for the CAC to state topics of primary concern or interest to CAC members and suggested topics or speakers for future meetings.)

Mona Groff: Noted that Mayor Robert Youssef had indicated that he would like the Crime-Free Multi-Housing Program to be mandatory for apartment complexes.

City Attorney Vail: Stated that this program was actually a component of the Residential Rental Inspection Program, noting that with implementation of this program, landlords would be required to go through the CFMHP.

Discussion ensued regarding how this program would work.

CDD Elliano: Explained that what the City has in place now is the CFMHP, which is a voluntary program for multi-family housing. What the City is considering is an expansion of that program, possibly making it mandatory, and requiring it for owners of single-family rentals as well as multi-family ones.

Chair Goodrich: Asked how far the City was from getting to that point.

Discussion ensued regarding the Residential Rental Inspection program.

Michael Ramirez: Suggested that it is important to consider creating some kind of youth leadership component to the City. He discussed the PLUS program, noting that John Vandenberg was looking for a City to pilot the program in, and that it was currently being implemented within the Hemet Unified School District.

Valerie Velez: Described how the PLUS program was working within the HUSD with 300 PLUS leaders. She explained that students are trained as peer leaders by John Vandenberg, noting that focus has been on school communities, but once the students have been trained they typically want to do more. It would be great to have a companion program in the City that those students could work with. The program is currently being implemented in middle and high schools, utilizing grant funding.

Michael Ramirez: Recommended that John Vandenberg make a presentation to the City regarding this program.

Valerie Velez: Added that the PLUS team is composed of kids who represent the diversity of the campus, rather than just those kids who typically get voted on for everything.

The CAC concurred that they would be amenable to having John Vandenberg do a presentation

Frank Gorman: Referred to a handout that had been distributed regarding the PAL Summer Day Camp program. He noted that the PAL supervisor had been present earlier in the meeting but had to leave.

Chief Brown: Suggested that while the PAL program was not all they would like it to be, they did have trained coordinators to work with the kids, and the program was a successful one.

Frank Gorman: Noted that while the PLUS program deals primarily with the older kids, the PAL program focuses on the younger ones.

Mona Groff: Inquired regarding how the kids are transported to these programs if they have working parents.

Chief Brown: Advised that the Police Department has a couple of vans that are often utilized to transport those kids who wish to be involved in the program.

5. Comments from the Public –CAC Chair

(This is an optional portion of the agenda at the discretion of the Chair, and allowed as time permits. The Chair may also limit the number of comments and the length of time for each speaker)

It was noted that the member of the public who had been present earlier in the meeting with intentions of speaking regarding the issue of panhandling was Tom Wilson, but he had to leave. Frank Gorman will have him contact CDD Elliano.

There were no other public comments.

6. Identification of Action Items for Next Meeting- CAC Chair and City Staff

Some of the items of discussion suggested for the next CAC meeting included: 1) the Rental Unit Inspection Program; 2) a presentation by John Vandenberg; 3) a discussion regarding where Riverside County and the City of San Jacinto are in implementing programs similar to Hemet ROCS.

Chair Goodrich: Inquired regarding the Police Department grant that was being sought.

Chief Brown: Advised that the City of Hemet was the only city within Riverside County, and one of 32 cities in the State to receive funding from the COPS grant. He explained that the grant had utilized the framework of Hemet ROCS, and with the two police officers that the grant could provide, the core of the Hemet ROCS task force could be created. The grant was written by Police Captain Robb Webb, however, further details should be saved for after the City Council had been given a presentation.

Jim Connell: Wondered if the grant would have a good chance of being renewed if all went well.

Chief Brown: Stated that there was no guarantee of funding for the grant in the future, and that funding had been reduced by 40% over the years since its creation.

Discussion ensued regarding grants and how they are acquired. Innovative ideas on policing are required. Hemet had scored #7 in the State this year, which was obviously a testimony to what the community has been through, but also a testimony to the Hemet ROCS program.

The CAC applauded Chief Brown and his associates for their grant writing efforts.

Frank Gorman: Suggested as a future agenda item that there be a discussion regarding how the organizations that the CAC members are affiliated with can help get the word out in the community regarding Hemet ROCS and other clean up efforts.

CDD Elliano: Stated that staff wished to work on efforts to disseminate all of the information discussed here into the community.

Gary Fowler: Noted that Police Sergeant Nate Miller had put together a great Power Point on community policing for the Green Coalition of the San Jacinto Valley. Perhaps this presentation should be given to other communities.

CAC Liaison Smith: Suggested that it was important to thank other agencies for sending their representatives to these meetings, particularly as this moves forward, because our efforts are being watched by other communities and agencies.

7. Adjournment to the meeting of July 26, 2012- CAC Chair

It was unanimously agreed to adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m. to the meeting of July 26, 2012.