



City of Fort Bragg

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Meeting Minutes Public Safety Committee

Wednesday, September 9, 2015

3:00 PM

Police Department Conference Room
250 Cypress Street

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Committee Member Peters called the meeting to order at 3:15p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: 4 - Fabian Lizarraga, Scott Deitz, Lindy Peters and Linda Ruffing

Absent: 2 - Steve Orsi and Tom Varga

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of July 8, 2015 Meeting

A motion was made by Committee Member Deitz, seconded by Committee Member Peters, that the Committee Minutes be approved. The motion carried by a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Elaine Ball asked for assistance from the Police Department in enforcement of the handicap parking laws in the City. She feels this is an issue that is often abused, especially at Harvest Market. When she calls to report violations, the officers always seem to arrive after the violator has left. She would like citizens reminded that they are not supposed to park on the hash marks of a handicap parking space. It is there to allow room for ramps and wheelchairs. She believes handicap persons are required to show their paperwork allowing them to have a handicap placard to officers. If this is true, it could present a problem, as more often than not, the vehicle owner is not present when a citation is issued for a parking violation. Elaine advised that the City would make a great deal of money if the handicap parking violation fee was raised to \$1000, as it is in some other cities. Elaine would like to see handicap parking calls made more a priority for officers so they can arrive on scene before the violator leaves. Committee Member Deitz asked if an officers can run a license plate to receive verification that the person has a handicap placard. The placards are issued to persons, not vehicles, so the officers can run a placard number and see if it is valid. Elaine asked Safeway to re-paint their handicap parking spaces and they did. The officers are not allowed to issue citations unless the handicap parking space is clearly marked on the pavement and there is also a sign indicating the spot is for handicap parking only. The merchant can call the Police if they notice parking violations on their property. Committee Member Peters mentioned that the fine is currently \$285 for a handicap parking violation, which he believes is a high amount already. He also asked if there was still a Disabled Action League in the City. This was a coalition that would address such issues as this and others for disabled citizens. Elaine was not aware of any group like this. Chief

Lizarraga will certainly pass the word on to the officers to pay more attention to violations of handicap parking and to make an effort to shorten their response times to these kinds of calls whenever possible.

CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

1. Receive Update from Chief Lizarraga on Various Police Department Initiatives Including: Reserve Officer(s), Drone, K-9 and Body Cameras

- Chief Lizarraga let the Committee know that the upgrade of the EOC (Emergency Operations Center) at the Police Department is moving along. The new tables have arrived, which will allow the set-up of various stations that will be very helpful in the event of any emergency. The cabinets have been ordered and will be installed soon.
- There is a local candidate interested in becoming a Police Officer. The Department is very interested in hiring him and may create a Reserve Police Officer position for him and any others who might be interested. This will allow us to start training him so that once a Police Officer position is available the department can smoothly transition him over to that position. Reserve Officers can be available for special events and other activities where they might be needed. This is an unpaid position. They generally receive a small stipend for uniforms, usually around \$35-\$50 a month. Deitz mentioned that this sounds like a good way to attract local people to the Police Department.
- The Police Department would like to obtain a Drone to assist with patrolling the Coastal Trail and special events in the City. Patrolling the Coastal Trail is not possible in a car. Bicycles will be used to patrol the trail but a Drone would add another way to keep an eye on the activity on the trail without sending out officers, unless it becomes necessary. Citizens have privacy concerns when it comes to Drones. The Department intends on patrolling in wide open areas with the Drone, such as the Coastal Trail and beaches where there is no expectation of privacy. Drones have a limited flight time of about 20-25 minutes and can be difficult to use in very windy situations. They would prove very beneficial in any natural disaster situation such as an earthquake, searching for a missing child or searching for a suspect in incidents such as was the case with Jere Melo or Deputy Delfioirentino. Deitz agreed that a Drone could save lives in certain situations. There would be a limited number of officers who would be trained to be experts in the use of the Drone, although all officers would have a basic knowledge of its capabilities. A FLIR (forward looking infrared device) can be mounted on a Drone to enhance its capabilities. Drones can also be used to view trespass marijuana grows in the woods. Most Drones are equipped with GPS so they can be found if they come down for any reason before being brought back to the station. Ruffing mentioned that some cities are prohibiting recreational and private Drone use because some people find them offensive as they can be noisy and obnoxious. Visitors to the Coastal Trail could be offended if there were numerous personal Drones buzzing around the trail. As far as Law Enforcement use, there are policies that other cities have established that Fort Bragg could use as a template for establishing its own policy. A Drone for Law Enforcement uses is supported by the Committee.
- The Chief gave a brief update on the purchase of Body Cameras for the Police Department. The Police Department is still waiting to see if they will be receiving the grant that was applied for to help with the initial purchase. The Department is looking at other grants and funding possibilities as well. It will take time to actually implement their use, but the Chief is in full support of body cameras and believes they will be a valuable tool for the Department. Peters feels they will be a good asset. They will let the citizens know our officers are doing a good job and it will be good for citizens to know that their interactions

with them are on camera. These videos can be used as evidence in court as well.

- The Department is exploring the possibility of obtaining a canine. The Chief recently met with the Sheriff's Department trainer. Their canines are very well trained. If the Police Department has a canine it will be a Narcotics and Protection Dog. It would be a good community relations tool to help bridge the gap between the officers and the community. Canines are a great resource for working with the schools as well. The Chief will need to determine the level of commitment and dedication of any officers who might be interested in becoming a canine officer. The interested officers will volunteer to attend the training sessions with the dogs and the Chief will decide through a selection process who will be the Department's Canine Officer. The initial cost of a canine can run anywhere from \$3,000 to \$10,000 plus the ongoing costs for maintenance and upkeep. The Department has had canines in the past and the Committee fully supports the idea of obtaining another one. Peters spoke of an incident in the past where he saw a Police Canine in action assisting with the arrest of a suspect. Once the Department is further along with the process of obtaining a canine the subject will be reported to the City Council.

MATTERS FROM COMMITTEE / STAFF

- Deitz mentioned that the "Trimmigrants" seem to be drifting into town looking for work. He would like the Officers to watch for them and keep them on their radar. In the past, officers have done "meet and greet" with these subjects. The officers do what they call, "Field Interviews" where they stop people just to check in with them and see what they are up to. They note the date and time and get their names, ask them where they live and other questions so they are on record in case their name comes up again in future incidents or crimes in the City.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 by Committee Member Peters.