



Public Safety Board

December 7, 2015

3:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

Members present: Mayor James Bouley (Acting Chair), Mr. Anthony Bourque, Ms. Lisa Brown, Mr. Don Carter, Mr. Michael Russell, Councilor Stephen Shurtleff, Councilor Brent Todd, Mr. Jim O'Neill, Councilor Fred Keach

City Staff Present: Deputy City Manager-Development Carlos Baia, Police Chief Brad Osgood, City Solicitor Jim Kennedy, Fire Chief Dan Andrus (Staff Liaison), Deputy Fire Chief Sean Toomey, Code Administrator Michael Santa, Licensing Officer Gene Blake

Guests: Ms. Donna Robie, Ms. Kelly Walter, Ms. Bridget Langevin Beckwith

Not Present: Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Rob Werner, Mr. Jim Cotsana, Councilor J. Allen Bennett, Ms. Carol Hargrove, Mr. Steve Edwards

Call to Order

Mayor Bouley called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of April 27, 2015. Councilor Shurtleff moved to approve the minutes as presented. Councilor Todd seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Referral from the City Council

Mayor Bouley asked the Board to address a referral from the City Council regarding an event that took place on Pembroke Road.

Ms. Donna Robie testified that there were several code violations, including cars blocking a fire hydrant and cars parked all over yards. She had contacted Gene Blake. It went on for nine days. There was chanting and the PA system was left on for nine days. She called the Police Department five times.

Ms. Langevin Beckwith said that she had moved out of her house and there was noise 14 hours a day.

Ms. Robie said that she contacted Gene Blake and let him listen over the phone. She said that he said that he could not believe how loud it was. She cited a code reference on the accumulation of rubbish or garbage. She said the residents took a hose and ran it to the City storm drain. There were health issues, including an open commode and overcrowding. She said they wanted to use her mother's backyard, which is not fenced. She had concerns about trespassing. She said that they put up a 187 foot stockade fence. She said that she wants standards for permit applications and that she had called Code Administration several times. She suggested that events lasting longer than one or two days should be in a public place, that neighbors' concerns should be taken into account, and that noise factors should be added to the permit. She said that health and safety issues should be addressed when notifications are made.

Ms. Langevin Beckwith suggested that the City tell people what the restrictions are on the permit form. She said that people will remember her house as the one being next to the home with all of the parties. She asked that people be treated equally. She said that the people holding the event were nice people, but that this had been swept under the rug.

Mayor Bouley commented that nothing has been "swept under the rug." The fact that we are in a public hearing on the matter shows the City is committed to responding to the issue.

Ms. Langevin Beckwith said that she is grateful that people are here addressing the issue.

Mayor Bouley asked if anyone else wanted to testify. No one came forward.

Mr. O'Neill asked if this was a social or a religious function.

The Mayor asked Mr. Baia, Mr. Santa, and Mr. Blake to come forward. He asked for their reactions.

Mr. Blake said that applications should be submitted 45 days in advance, but it is better to issue a permit no matter when the application is received than to have no permit at all. It gives the Police more teeth if there is a problem. He saw the photos. He never saw more than 50 people there. He had visited the site on a Sunday. He said the permit was received on September 25th. It was a religious event and might have been treated in a different way. When he visited, he was told that it was a once in a lifetime religious event. Many of the participants own businesses in Concord. He has been with the City for 42 years, with 35 of those serving as Licensing Officer. He said that he may have been wrong in issuing a permit for a multi-day event. He did not see a commode. He said that they were using a shop vacuum to pull water from puddles and that they had two porta potties. He reviewed permit conditions.

Mr. O'Neill asked if religious events can only be done by a special exception to zoning. Mr. Santa said yes.

Mr. Carter asked if a nine day event triggered any alarm bells. Mr. Blake said that if this were to happen again, he would put it on City property. Mr. Carter asked what happens when applications are received. Mr. Blake said they get everyone together-Fire, Police, etc. to discuss it. That did not happen with this event as the application was received on Friday afternoon and there was no time.

Mr. Baia said that this was the first issue with a multi-day permit in a residential neighborhood. Councilor Todd commented that it was really an anomaly. Mayor Bouley asked about multiple day flea market types of events. Mr. Blake said that they do not need to get a permit. Mr. Santa added that this is more like a yard sale.

Mayor Bouley asked if there were any questions. There were none. He asked what the pleasure of the Board was. He said that as an advisory group, the Board should make a recommendation on multi day events. He said that he can't see that any zoning changes are needed. He said that when people run for office, they receive a packet on their responsibilities, including financial disclosures and other requirements. He asked if that would be helpful. Mr. O'Neill said that it would be helpful. Mayor Bouley said that there needs to be some discretion. Councilor Shurtleff suggested looking at penalties for people not getting permits. He said that there should be no differentiation between secular and religious events. Mayor Bouley commented that it may not be clear when a permit is needed.

Mr. Carter said that it would be irresponsible for the City not to tell people what the consequences are. Councilor Todd thanked everyone for the information and asked if there is any way that the City could highlight this better on its website. What are the penalties?

Mr. Bourque said that residents complained during the event and nothing was done. He asked why their concerns were not addressed at the time.

Chief Osgood said that the Police Department was dispatched to the scene five times, twice for parking issues. He said that officers did not observe anything unreasonable.

Mayor Bouley asked a question of the group. Should it come up with some changes or ask the (Community Development) Department to come up with some changes?

Ms. Brown moved to ask the Department to come up with some changes. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Updates from Police and Fire Chiefs on Methamphetamine and Heroin Use

Chief Osgood distributed two handouts, one of drug offenses and arrests and the second on overdose calls and Police personnel hours. He said that the #1 drug threat is heroin and fentanyl. Fentanyl is fifty times more potent than heroin. Fatalities are resulting from the combination of fentanyl and cocaine. They did a sweep two months ago and arrested ten people.

Methamphetamine is an entirely different matter. He pointed out an upward spike in the charts. Overdose fatalities began to increase at the end of 2013. There were two overdose deaths in 2012, four in 2013 and there have been nine this year to date. Chief Osgood also discussed the number of personnel hours spent on overdoses. While there has been some drop off, that number is equivalent to 45 eight hour shifts, or about \$14 to \$18 thousand dollars. Ms. Brown asked why methamphetamine is worse. Chief Osgood said that heroin makes you sleepy, while meth can make behavior dangerous and erratic. The age range from drug overdose deaths goes from 19 to 56. There have been 237 arrests as of today. Mayor Bouley asked if there are things we should be or could be doing. Chief Osgood said that the state is working on a task force, which would have been better if it had been started a year ago. He is going to assign another resource to the drug enforcement unit, beginning on January 3rd. Councilor Keach asked where you send an addict who wants to get help. Chief Osgood said that they don't have directions for addicts who present themselves and the best advice is to contact their primary care provider, although not everyone has one of those. He said that he has been working with New Futures and the Capital Area Public Health Network. There is a need for a clinician early on. Most recovery treatment does not need to be on an inpatient basis.

Mr. Carter asked if moving someone leaves another staff short. Chief Osgood said yes, but it is needed to address a priority.

Chief Andrus reviewed the statistics in his report, including a six fold increase in the number of provider impressions of overdose or intentional misuse of medication. He also cited an threefold increase in the number of narcan administrations over three years. He said that the provider impression is the paramedic's or EMT's best conclusion after treating a patient, but sometimes it is difficult to tell, as the patient is unconscious or uncooperative or may deny drug use. He said that field providers would say that there are periods when they seem to be responding to these calls constantly. He said the narcan statistics are also skewed as it is taking more doses of narcan to reverse the much more potent combinations of opioids that are being seen.

Chief Andrus reviewed the Fire Department's activities in response to the drug crisis, including working with the Capital Area Public Health Network and with Concord Hospital, the Visiting Nurses Association, and Riverbend Community Mental Health. He said that he had attended an event sponsored by the public health network at Concord

Hospital last Friday for people with family or friends who have addiction problems. With a week's notice, the room was packed, showing how widespread the problem is.

Councilor Keach asked if people who have overdoses are charged with an offense. Chief Osgood said no. Councilor Keach said that is a good thing. Mr. O'Neill asked if the overdoses were occurring in one area of the City. Chief Andrus said no, they were all throughout the City and actually in every corner, even some of the rural areas. Mr. Bourque asked about the source of the fentanyl. Chief Osgood said that it is primarily Mexico. It is more expensive and people have no idea what they are getting. He said that there have also been some suicides by opiate overdose.

Fireworks

Chief Osgood reported that there were 34 calls for illegal fireworks in July. Thirty percent of those calls occur between July 3rd and July 5th. A few occur after 11:00 p.m. These numbers are consistent with 2013 and 2014.

Problem Properties

Chief Osgood said that they had looked at 74 Rumford Street and highlighted five different properties with problems. Several properties have a very high number of police responses. Mayor Bouley asked the Board if they had any questions. There were none. Mayor Bouley asked Mr. Kennedy if he had anything to add. Mr. Kennedy said no. Mayor Bouley asked the public if they had any comments. Ms. Connors said that other people are experiencing what they have been through. Something has to be triggered. She is interested in landlord notification and hoping for more discussion. Chief Osgood commented that landlords are a good resource but taking to them could compromise an investigation.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled at the call of the Chair.

Adjournment

Mr. Russell moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. O'Neill seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:25 p.m.