



***Community Housing, Neighborhood Development and Public Safety Committee***

*Chaired by Council Member Golden*

*Committee Members: Golden, Alexander, Ewing, and Williams*

**November 14, 2017 – 10:00 a.m.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Lobby Conference Room**

**Minutes**

**Present:**

Jeff Golden, Chairman

Committee Members, Jason Ewing (arrived at 10:34 a.m.) and Chris Williams

**Absent:**

Committee Member Latimer Alexander

**Staff Present:**

Randy McCaslin, Deputy City Manager; Mike McNair, Director of Community Development & Housing; Tom Tricot, GIS Manager; Ken Shultz, Police Chief; Richard Fuqua, Affordable Housing Manager; Toni Jackson, Affordable Housing Specialist; Lori Loosemore, Local Codes Enforcement Supervisor; Ben Wagener, CD Intern; Eric Olmedo, Budget and Administrative Director; and Lisa Vierling, City Clerk

**News Media:**

Pat Kimbrough, *High Point Enterprise*

*Note: The following handouts were distributed at the meeting and will be attached as a permanent part of these proceedings.*

- ✓ Update- Properties in the Top 10% of Crime or Disorder Problems
- ✓ Update- Core City Homebuyer Incentive Program

Prior to the meeting being called to order, Chairman Golden informed the Police Chief about some complaints he has received from a resident, who has had issues with excessive false alarms. Chief Shultz agreed to look into the situation to determine the issues.

Chairman Golden called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Review of City's Ordinance- Burglar & Robbery Alarms**

Police Chief Shultz, reported there are approximately 10,933 alarms currently registered in the city, and approximately 26 different alarm companies these are registered with. The city contracts with a third-party administrator, Cry Wolf, to process the permits, fees and collections associated with the alarms. There is an annual registration requirement/fee for burglar/robbery alarms. The Chief explained that the current ordinance has no teeth in it to mandate the alarm installers to advise the residents that they are required to register the alarms.

Chief Shultz reported they have had approximately 31,000 false alarms, and 4,346 actually resulted in charges, which means a majority of these were first or second alarms which is no charge. Weather-related false alarms are disqualified from the count. He further explained that these charges can be waived with documentation from their alarm company if they had a faulty detector that has been repaired. The collection process is completely handled by Cry Wolf, our third-party administrator. They have collected 83% for the year so far of those fines and fees. According to the contract, Cry Wolf retains 40% of what is collected, and High Point gets 60%.

Deputy City Manager Randy McCaslin explained there were two purposes for the implementation of this policy. One, it was getting to be a such a problem that would have required additional administrative personnel to be added in the Police Department to handle the work load; and, the expense of the software upgrade was another part of it, as well as the number of call volumes for false alarms.

Chief Shultz shared some ideas that Cry Wolf has suggested that have merit to help with the issues.

1. They suggested offering an alarm education class on their web portal that would give them an option of taking a test after they receive the first fee for non-registration, which would then be waived. This would be accessible on the city's website.
2. If the \$10 fee is paid within five days of receipt of the letter and they choose to participate in the on-line class, then the fee would be waived.

The Chief explained they are all about reducing fines and stressed that the purpose of implementing the Burglar & Robbery Alarm ordinance is not try make money.

Chairman Golden suggested putting a \$10 fee on the initial installation if they do not register the alarm, and start charging the second year. Chief Shultz felt this might be problematic because there are jurisdictions outside of High Point that have to be held accountable as well. He offered to review and look into the suggestion.

The Chief shared that he did look at another opportunity that he saw that another jurisdiction was doing, about the possibility of including a question about whether or not they have camera systems facing the streets while doing self-registration on the website. He noted this would be totally voluntary, but felt it would be extremely helpful from an investigative standpoint. However, he explained it was determined that due to the expense and the associated privacy concerns with the cameras, it might not be a viable option.

Chairman Golden inquired about the number of residential false alarms versus false alarms at businesses. Chief Shultz replied there are about 8,000 false alarms at residences versus only 3,000 at businesses.

Mr. McCaslin asked how the re-registration process would be handled. Chief Shultz explained notices would be sent out via the email addresses provided when they register and the registration would be valid for one year after signing up, so all of them would not come up for renewal at the same time.

Chief Shultz stated that he would report back on the proposal with the on-line education class and the possibility of waiving the fee for training.

#### **Update- Top 10% of Crime or Disorder Properties**

Mike McNair Director of Community Development & Housing, advised that staff provided an overview to the Community Housing, Neighborhood Development & Public Safety Committee last month regarding the statutes. Since that time, a working committee was formed to further study the statutes and to see if it might be viable to implement a program. Serving on the committee are Mike McNair, Director of Community Development & Housing; City Attorney JoAnne Carlyle, Major Ken Steele; Tom Tricot, GIS Manager; Lori Loosemore, Local Codes Enforcement Supervisor; and Ben Wagener, CD Intern. He advised that the Committee met on October 11<sup>th</sup>. Mr. McNair reported that further review of the data indicated that there are 190 eligible rental properties in the Top 10% (20 units). This would only apply to residential-rental properties.

These properties would be subject to one initial minimum housing inspection and depending on the outcome of the initial inspection, it might require additional inspections. Also discussed were possible procedures the procedures that could be used and it was suggested the procedures used for the Top 10% of Crime/disorder properties could be similar to the liquor/party house tool kit that the Police Department currently uses for liquor houses.

Mr. McNair advised that the Legal Department is in the process of preparing a proposed ordinance with a February/March time frame to bring it back. It was also suggested that if Council does decide to move forward with adoption of an ordinance, that it be phased in similar to that of the tethering ordinance, which was phased in over a one and one-half year period before fines were issued. Mr. McNair explained they are also exploring whether or not it would be implemented through a registration process versus a permit. Properties in the Top 10%, if found in violation, could be assessed a fine up to \$500.

Chairman Golden inquired about the method that would be used to collect the fines. Mr. McNair explained the city would be able to take advantage of the NC Debt Setoff Program for collection, but it could not be attached to utilities.

Chairman Golden stated he would like to get more details as to what the liquor/party house tool kit looks like and how that process could work in these situations.

Mr. McNair concluded his presentation with a map identifying the 190 properties in the Top 10% of crime or disorder problem areas, which outlined a major concentration in the area east of Main Street and south of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.

#### **Core City Homebuyer Incentive program**

Mr. McNair reported that 86 applications have been received for the Core City Homebuyer Incentive program since its inception and that eight were withdrawn for whatever reason. The total incentives expended or reserved was \$525,000 (\$345,000 in local funds and \$180,000 in federal dollars). He advised that the NC Housing Finance program is not currently active and it is uncertain as to whether or not it will be reinstated or if any additional monies will become available. He pointed out 2016-2017 was a big year and 2017-2018 seems to be at a good pace.

Chairman Golden asked about the possibility of determining what percent of these funds actually came to High Point versus Greensboro. Toni Jackson, Affordable Housing Specialist, offered to find out and report back. It was noted that there were only five counties in the state that received monies for this program and these were the counties with the highest foreclosure rates.

Committee Member Williams pointed out the huge increase from the program in 2015-2016 when only eight units were closed on versus 44 units closed in 2016-2017. Mr. McNair explained that the program was actually changed in 2015-2016 because of a lack of interest and no applications received in 2014-2015 when the program was initially implemented. In 2015-2016, Council changed the program because in the first year of the program (2014-2015) it was a straight loan, and no one applied. Then when the State program came out, staff suggested to Council that the program be changed to match the State program and make it an incentive for others to move into the Core.

#### **More Discussion on Review of City's Ordinance- Burglar & Robbery Alarms**

As Committee Member Ewing arrived after discussion of this matter, Chairman Golden asked if he had received any phone calls about the burglar and robbery alarms. Committee Member Ewing explained he had not received many, and the ones he did receive did not really understand the program.

Following up on Chairman Golden's inquiry regarding complaints he received from the resident regarding issues with their burglar/robbery alarm, Chief Shultz advised that within a two-day period (October 17 and 18), the Police Department responded to three false call alarms at this address and according to the alarm company, it was determined to be due to a kitchen motion detector that kept activating the alarm. He suggested that if the resident will produce a letter

verifying they were indeed out of town at the time and produce documentation that the sensor has been repaired, then the Police Department could review and address it.

There being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Lisa B. Vierling, MMC  
City Clerk

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Jeff Golden, Chair