

Committee of the Whole

Meeting Notes

August 24, 2020 6:30pm

President of New Philadelphia City Council Don Kemp called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM in the Council Chambers in the John Knisely Centre.

President of New Philadelphia City Council Don Kemp opened the meeting at 6:30pm.

Mr. President, I would move to go into a Committee of the Whole to consider recommending the Neighborhood Watch Program to City Administration for implementation in New Philadelphia and further to recommend adding at least one Detective position in the New Philadelphia Police Department and to adopt a resolution of recommendation for action to be taken by the full council.

MR. LANZER SECONDED THE MOTION

5 YEAS

COUNCIL MOVED INTO A COMMITTEE OF A WHOLE TO CONSIDER
RECOMMENDING THE NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAM TO
CITY ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Holland made the following statement:

A few weeks ago Mayor Day ask members of council for ideas to attack the drug overdose problem in New Philadelphia and what I sent to Mayor Day and members of council was information that has a track record and has proven successful in many cities across the nation. I did not speak with the Director of Public Safety or the Chief of Police or any police officer as the Mayor had requested the information. If the decision is made to implement a Neighborhood Watch Program, I would suggest discussion with all levels of the Police Department prior to implementation.

I would point out that adoption, or not, of Neighborhood Watch is an administrative matter not legislative...with the exception of the recommendation to add an additional Detective position(s) and to authorize the funding needed to support the position(s).

It is apparent to me that what is being done today to overcome the drug overdose problem, drugs in the community, and drug related deaths is not working. That's not a criticism that's a fact. That is not to say everyone is not working hard to overcome the problem...it's just not working.

I referenced the City of Saginaw, Michigan in my memo for information...only to demonstrate the effectiveness of the partnership of the community and police and fire departments. The severity of crime, drugs and gangs that was being experienced was unprecedented and after years of battling the crime problem Saginaw City Administration determined that just hiring more police officers would not overcome the crime, drug and gang problem and decided to call on the community and get them involved in resolving the problem...thousands of eyes watching the community rather than just a few. The Saginaw Chief of Police, at the time, came from the City of Detroit and was familiar with Neighborhood Watch and its positive benefits for overcoming crime. It was apparent without police department buy-in, leadership by the Chief of Police and police officer involvement Neighborhood Watch would not result in program success. I believe that same commitment also applies in New Philadelphia; buy in by the police department is necessary for success. In Saginaw, Neighborhood Watch in conjunction with the police department was successful and the community is now on track to returning to being a business center where people want to live.

The National Neighborhood Watch Program, neighborhoodwatch.com, is housed in the National Sheriffs Association in Alexandria, VA. and on their website states: "Our nation is built on the strength of our citizens. Every day, we encounter situations calling upon us to be the eyes and ears of law enforcement. Not only does neighborhood watch allow citizens to

help in the fight against crime, it is also an opportunity for communities to bond through service. The Neighborhood Watch Program draws upon the compassion of average citizens, asking them to ‘lend their neighbors a hand’. The National Neighborhood Watch Program is the portal for training to assist law enforcement agencies and their communities and provide technical assistance, resource documents...networking, and assistance in the field.”

It has been said...so what another druggie dies from an overdose...just someone else we don’t have to deal with. I am as concerned about how city resources are used, whether funds or personnel, but I am also concerned about my fellow citizen, as I know everyone in this chamber is. What is being done today in New Philadelphia to combat deaths from drug overdose and drug trafficking is not working...we have become a center for drug sales, drug use and drug related deaths. I would further point out that the drug trade that we once knew is no longer as easily identified...its not the dealer on the corner and the user in a back room...now the dealer and user are one in the same...the user has to sell to support his habit. This mere fact is making the job of law enforcement more difficult.

There are also problematic ancillary areas in New Philadelphia...vacant structures that become breeding grounds for illicit activities. Some of these breeding grounds are identifiable...some are not...some have absentee owners, others are abandoned...all need to be addressed as problematic.

I also referenced in my memo to the Mayor the Next Door App; and even though a colleague is in opposition, without knowing the full comment intent, this might be a starting point for making citizen contact to create a Neighborhood Watch since a number of citizens are already in contact with each other.

I want it understood that I in no way am trying to manage any aspect of any City Department...I was merely responding to a request by our Mayor for ideas...I submitted mine...I don’t know if this program will work in New Philadelphia...I do know what is being done is not working. I think that’s the reality of today.

Mr. Zucal had the following comment:

I would first like to thank Mr. Holland for bringing this issue to the fore front. I was researching the same website that Mr. Holland had. There is a format to use, it’s a five step process. We need to have as many volunteers as possible in the field, have regular meetings, listen to community concerns. One of the most critical pieces is a communication plan. The next step is taking action and holding meetings and events. At this point it does become an administrative function to see how this carries out.

Police Chief Goodwin made the following statement:

A lot of this goes back to the aftermath of September 11, 2001 when we had the “See Something Say Something” push. There are a lot of people who don’t realize we have a 24/7 police department. Every day there are at least 3 police officers on the road at all hours. With the technology it’s very easy to set up group text messages for different sections of the City.

President Kemp asked Chief Goodwin his thoughts on staffing.

Police Chief Goodwin:

I’ve had conversations with the Safety Director on this. For us a number of years ago when we had a School Resource Officer we went from having three detectives to two detectives. My only detective working on criminal stuff, Captain Nelson, has 40 open cases on his desk. A lot of these cases take some leg work. We generally handle between 12,000 and 13,000 calls a year. The little criminal cases are not going to get their due justice. Since we have a School Resource Officer the school is paying us \$55,000 a year, that gives us the funding for another officer. Things

aren't slowing down. We are getting busier and busier as the City keeps growing. To keep us ahead of the game I think we need another police officer working afternoon shift and we need another detective.

Mr. Zucal had the following comments:

As you mentioned different items during your presentation, in my ward, the North Broadway area, we had two violent acts take place. My son's truck was also broken into recently. The police officer told us he had to put that on the back burner because there weren't enough officers to investigate that incident. When petty crimes gets left unattended that only adds to the drug problem.

Safety Director Popham had the following comment:

From someone who had been involved in law enforcement for many years and also being there now, it is definitely not like it used to be. (Crimes) used to just happen after dark, now we get calls at all hours. A lot of it has to do with weak links in the mental health system and the court system. Some programs are working, some are not. At least they're trying. We need to try more. If you have the information coming in to the police department and you don't have enough staff to investigate it it will continue. The criminal doesn't follow the rules. We have to follow the rule book. What that takes is personnel.

Fire Chief Parrish had the following comment:

I think the Neighborhood Watch Program is a good idea. I can speak a little bit about the dilapidated structures. One of the things in the Property Maintenance Code is to have the ability to condemn properties and we've been doing that. Are we doing it as fast as we'd like to see? No, simply because there's so many. We would need a full-time person to work on that. At the Fire Department we need to increase staffing to coincide with the increase in call volume. You can't just fix this tonight or next week. This is going to take some time to change the course.

President Kemp asked Chief Parrish if he sees a lot of drug activities going on in the vacant buildings. Chief Parrish says that he sees evidence of drug activities in those buildings.

Captain Wes Halter had the following comment:

The problems are everywhere in New Phila. right now. There is a high number of drug overdoses in the City, and a lot of the overdoses are in people who have mental health issues. You have to treat both.

Mr. Zucal had the following comment:

I don't think the drug issues we're facing are just limited to vacant properties or the typical drug user. I think we have to explore it is a comprehensive issue and not target a certain population.

Mayor Day had the following comment:

I'd like to thank everybody for your comments tonight. It is revealing what our role will be in trying to solve this problem. I'd like to hear some more comments from Council, whether we should pursue hiring police officers in order to solve this problem. I'd like to refer to the Finance Committee regarding using the funds from the schools for the School Resource Officer in order to solve this problem.

Mr. Ricklic had the following comment:

I know it's a heartache at times and it's an issue that needs to be addressed and be dressed right up front. Chief Goodwin, is there a program like the SAFER Grant for law enforcement that we could pursue?

Chief Goodwin had the following response:

There is one that we could pursue in the 2021 year.

Mr. Ricklic continued:

I think mental health is one of the biggest issues in our area and how we stereotype people with mental health problems. As Council I feel like we have a very important role as not trying to tag them as different but how can we help them, because I think the more we can help on the mental health issue is going to help the police and fire departments.

Captain Wes Halter mentioned that the ADAHMS Board has a renewal levy coming up in November, and it's important that the City stands behind that levy and passes it so people with mental health issues can continue receiving the care they need.

Councilman Holland had the following comment:

I'm in a unique position where in my neighborhood the Chief of Police only lives a block away. We have low crime in our neighborhood. I know as a former department head when I was asked "how many more people do you need?" I knew if I said what we really needed that would be the end of it. Chief Goodwin, you said you need an additional patrol officer and detective, is that all you need?

Chief Goodwin said he needs three more people on staff.

Mr. Zucal mentioned that the City needs to have a proactive response to the drug problem. We need the proper data so we know exactly what we need to do.

Mr. Lanzer had the following comment:

I'm absolutely on board I think if you get us the numbers and take it to Finance Committee we should get the police chief the three officers he needs.

President Kemp ordered a Rising Vote as Committee of the Whole.'

Mr. Holland made the following motion:

The Committee of the Whole has met to consider sending the Neighborhood Watch Program to the Administration for further review, and to consider adding at least one detective position and two patrol officers to the New Philadelphia Police Department. I would ask for a Rising Vote on the Resolution, and that we further include better support for services that are available in the Community. I recommend action to be taken to the full Council.

MRS. MAY SECONDED THE MOTION
5 YEAS
THE MOTION HAS PASSED

Action: No action was taken.

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Ricklic made a motion to adjourn at 7:24 p.m.