

TUMWATER PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING

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CONVENE: 8:02 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair Judith Hoefling and Councilmembers Ed Hildreth and Betsy Murphy.

Staff: City Administrator John Doan, Police Chief John Stines, and Recording Secretary Valerie Gow.

RED LIGHT PHOTO ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM:

Chair Hoefling referred members to a copy of a recent newspaper article on the federal court dismissal of a lawsuit alleging red-light camera fines are too high by cities within the state that have employed the systems.

Police Chief Stines reported the committee has considered the implementation of a Red Light Photo Enforcement Program since 2007. Since then, several legal issues, lawsuits, and legislation have been sought to change the manner in which the programs are currently administered. To date, all those challenges have been unsuccessful. The last ballot measure in November 2009 by Tim Eyman would have been the most impactful to jurisdictions if it had passed requiring all proceeds from the program to be returned to the state. The briefing will bring members up-to-date on current and past efforts involving the Red Light Photo Enforcement Program.

When the City first began examining the option of installing the system, the City was contacted by a representative from Redflex Traffic Systems, one of two main companies that offer the system to jurisdictions in the state. The representative completed a traffic survey to gauge traffic infractions. One survey area was Capitol Boulevard and Custer Way – west bound. A total of 12 violations occurred during the 12-hour survey period. Police Chief Stines played a video of the actual survey and the violations that occurred.

The second survey area was Capitol Boulevard and Trosper Road – north bound. There were approximately 20 violations, which is fairly significant. Right turn violations were the majority of the infractions. The survey was taken in 2007. Right turns are not the main problem, but can be problematic.

The third survey area was Trosper Road and Little Rock Road – west bound. There were 44 total violations during the survey period with 7 red light thru violations. Another intersection was Trosper Road and Tyee Drive with most of those violations left turns.

Police Chief Stines reviewed 2009 collision statistics based on intersection locations. Capital Boulevard and Tumwater Boulevard reveal 10 collisions for the year. A total of 371 collisions occurred in Tumwater in 2009. There are very few vehicle/pedestrian accidents in Tumwater, with the exception of a recent incident occurring in the Albertson's parking lot.

Police Chief Stines said at the minimum to support the program, there should be at least 15 violations daily at intersections that have the system installed.

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Councilmember Hildreth commented that the information from Lacey revealed that it was inclusive that traffic infractions reduced at intersections with cameras. What is surprising is that the number of infractions actually increased. That indicates that the cameras are not a deterrent. Police Chief Stines replied that there could be a number of factors contributing to the increase, such as an increase in commuters through the area. It was noted that detours are occurring in the City such as Fones Road that could be adding traffic.

Chair Hoefling said it appears there is no current information especially since the increase in the number of state office buildings. Police Chief Stines suggested a decision should be made based on behavior problems with many people running red lights. The goal is to reduce those occurrences to an acceptable level as well as reducing complaints. Councilmember Murphy recommended implementing the program before someone is seriously killed or injured. Councilmember Hildreth said his concern is whether the program is effective in reducing infractions.

Police Chief Stines added that the City of Olympia has put its program on hold. The City of Lacey receives much negative mail because of its red light program.

Chair Hoefling asked about other ways to change behaviors. Police Chief Stines suggested increasing education and enforcement efforts. Chair Hoefling inquired about parking an empty patrol car in strategic locations as a way to reduce infractions and slow vehicle speeds. Police Chief Stines said the use of a patrol car would need to be used sporadically to be effective; otherwise motorists would tend to ignore it after a period.

City Administrator Doan asked about the potential of periodic traffic enforcement at intersections using the City's motorcycle teams. Police Chief Stines explained that there are some limitations imposed by the court as the officer must be located on the same side as the motorist. However, motorcycle enforcement could be scheduled in different areas at different times on a more frequent basis.

Chair Hoefling expressed interest in pursuing that option rather than cameras at this time.

Councilmember Murphy inquired about the cost associated with the red light program. Police Chief Stines advised that the cost for one intersection approach in 2007 was \$4,500. Administrative costs for the Police Department would be fairly low. However, the costs associated with the court are uncertain. The company handles all the billing and receipt of funds. However an officer must review each violation to approve issuing a ticket.

City Administrator Doan added that although the City would receive revenue, the City would likely need to hire personnel to address the volume. Approximately 1,400 citations annually require one full-time clerk.

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Councilmember Hildreth asked about the intersections staff would recommend if the City decided to move forward with the program. Police Chief Stine indicated his choice would be Capitol Boulevard and Trospen Road with one camera focusing on the northbound lane. He recommended pursuing the program slowly if the City Council elects to move forward. The department can begin with motorcycle enforcement and track results.

Councilmember Murphy added that many of the commuters traveling through that intersection don't live within the City. Councilmember Hildreth cautioned about public perception and that it will be perceived that the City is initiating the program because it brings in revenue. Chair Hoefling agreed that public outreach is warranted if the City elects to move forward. Police Chief Stines added that Redflex also provides some public outreach and media assistance. No one particularly likes the idea of cameras at intersections. Citizens understand the need for safety but don't like the idea of the cameras. Councilmember Hildreth recommended adding signage at the intersection as well to help educate motorists about enforcement activities.

Committee members and staff discussed motorcycle enforcement and police monitoring presence. Police Chief Stines recommended pursuing a phased approach with stepped up enforcement through motorcycle monitoring beginning immediately and then presenting information to the Council for possibly pursuing the red light enforcement program.

CONSENSUS:

The Public Safety Committee recommended the City Council pursue increased motorcycle monitoring and enforcement and then proceed with the possibility of implementing the red light photo enforcement program with staff presenting additional information and data.

Committee members and staff discussed cell phone usage and texting while driving. Even though there are laws against cell phone usage while driving, it appears usage of cell phones hasn't decreased substantially.

**ESSB 6476 SEX
CRIMES
TRAFFICKING:**

Chair Hoefling said she introduced the topic because Engrossed Substitute Bill 6476 was initiated by former U.S. Congresswoman Linda Smith and state Senator Karen Fraser. Since then she has heard from many other women groups about the issue of sex trafficking of youths and women, a crime that is far reaching than most people are aware of. Sex trafficking occurs in other counties but it's also rampant in the United States. Chair Hoefling said she's followed the case of Lindsey Baum very closely and many believe she was taken for sex trafficking. The bill passed both houses of the Legislature and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

Police Chief Stines reported the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs also support the bill very strongly. It is one of the issues in addition to kidnapping and sexual exploitation of children through the internet. The bill goes

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after the customer base and provides jail time as well as vehicle impoundment by the person under arrest if the vehicle was used in the commission of the crime. The bill moves the offense from a class B felony to a class A felony. It also establishes treatment and intervention assistance/services to victims.

Chair Hoefling commented on the seriousness of the crimes and how widespread criminal activities are occurring throughout the United States. Victims are not only girls, but boys as well.

FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS:

Chair Hoefling referred to agenda setting for future meetings. She noted that she will receive information from Senator Fraser on all legislation impacting public safety that the Legislature passed. Police Chief Stines reported staff is working on updating the City's criminal code. The committee will receive a future briefing.

Police Chief Stines reported Mayor Kmet expressed interest in addressing the Police Department expansion project. The committee will receive a briefing in the next several months.

Councilmember Murphy recommended including an update on increased enforcement by motorcycle patrols.

City Administrator Doan reported the City's policy update of its criminal code and tracking of changes is being accomplished by a company that specializes in keeping municipality criminal codes up-to-date. It's very challenging for the City to track the changes and update policies and regulations. The City is awaiting a final review of the draft from the Police Guild.

Committee members discussed options for informing the City Council about the update and agreed to include an update during the Public Safety Committee report to the Council.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is on April 13, 2010 at 8:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business, Chair Hoefling adjourned the meeting at 8:49 a.m.

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President
Puget Sound Meeting Services