



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Public Safety Council Committee

Tuesday, February 20, 2024

5:00 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

Present 7 - Mitch Johnson;David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[MIN-24:015](#) Minutes for the Public Safety Committee meeting on January 16, 2024

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Chris Gibson, seconded by Chris Moore, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

4. NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCES TO BE INTRODUCED

[ORD-24:007](#) AN ORDINANCE TO THE CITY OF JONESBORO TO PLACE VARIOUS TRAFFIC SIGNS AT DESIGNATED LOCATIONS AS DETERMINED BY THE TRAFFIC CONTROL COMMITTEE

Sponsors: Engineering

A motion was made by Chris Gibson, seconded by Chris Moore, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

[RES-24:013](#) RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO CONDEMN PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 501 Puryear St. Jonesboro, AR 72401; Parcel # 01-143133-20100

Sponsors: Code Enforcement

Attachments: [501 Puryear Boarding and Securing Affidavit](#)
[501 Puryear Boarding and Securing Returned Cert Letter](#)
[501 Puryear Boarding and Securing Returned Reg Letter](#)
[501 Puryear Inspection Report](#)
[501 Puryear Map](#)
[501 Puryear Pre-condemnation Notice Affidavit](#)
[501 Puryear Pre-condemnation Returned Cert Letter](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_02_48_Pro](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_03_39_Pro](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_03_45_Pro](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_04_30_Pro](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_06_12_Pro](#)
[WIN_20231117_11_06_15_Pro](#)

A motion was made by Chris Gibson, seconded by Brian Emison, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

5. PENDING ITEMS

6. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Mitch Johnson said, Chief Elliot, anything for Public Safety? Police Chief Rick Elliot approached the podium and said, I don't really have anything for the agenda, but I would certainly entertain any questions from the committee if anybody has anything from my end. I will say we did have a meeting of the West End Association. I believe the mayor brought that up the last time. One of the key talking points was the fact that the crime rate for the past three years has trended down, so we're pleased to see those numbers decline and hopefully they'll stay in that declining mode as we move forward. We contribute that to our staffing levels being back up and then, of course, we contribute the higher arrest rate due to increased technology that we're adding throughout the city with our cameras and license plate readers. It's a daily occurrence now that we're making cases with this system as we did just a week or so ago at Plato's Closet when it got robbed. Approximately one hour later the suspect was standing in handcuffs in West Memphis. We were able to get the vehicle identified through the technology, got the tag, and had authorities down there waiting on his return to Mississippi, and to find out he was involved in multiple other robberies in the Mid-South. Again, just another one of many, many success stories with the Real-Time Crime Center concept that's up and running. We're just looking to continue that process and these stories will continue to roll. Chairman Mitch Johnson said, I have to admit that's pretty impressive how technology just... Councilmember Chris Moore said, skip up to the good part Chief. Tell them what the number of calls for service was in the entire West End Neighborhood Association, from Gee Street to Main Street, to Nettleton to the railroad tracks last year was 65. Out of how many calls did ya'll make... Chief Elliot said, we answered 65,000 calls for service. Councilmember Chris Moore said, out of all those calls for service only 65 of them fell within the entire West End Neighborhood Association, and we contributed most of that to Scott Roper's Code Enforcement. He's been down there beating the bushes, and

you know, I'm a firm believer when the place looks better, people who do bad things go somewhere else and I think that pretty much summed it up. Chief Elliot said, I'll commend the West End Association, they do a great job of working together and I wish more areas of town would work together like they do. They're a shining example of community involvement and what community organizations should be like. Scenic Hills comes in right there along with them. They do a great job also, but if we get other areas in the city do the same we would see a lot cleaner city and a lot safer city. Councilmember Chris Moore said, everyone was all riled up but you could have heard a pin drop when that number flopped out of the Chief's mouth. I started to ask for a comparison to how many calls for service, like at Ridge Point. I mean, 65 was crimes against person, crimes against property. You know, that's pretty amazing.

Councilmember LJ Bryant said, and Chief, I'll say too, that I've noticed since you're more fully staffed, I see officers at Craighead Forest more now. I go to Craighead Forest daily but at irregular times and I see officers frequently throughout various times. Chief Rick Elliot said, I will touch on the staffing report while I'm here. I'm currently four short today, so that's something we haven't seen in a long time. I do have 15 that's in our current academy. With those 15 in the academy and four short, those are still not bodies out there on the streets, but the ones in the academy will graduate the first part of April and by spring they'll be on the streets. I'm hoping this spring, late spring into the summer, you'll see bicycle patrols back up and running throughout the town, something we've not been able to do in a while. Having this fully staffed number, or close to being fully staffed, is something I have not seen. I thank ya'll for the pay adjustment. We contribute that to being where we're at, especially on the recruiting end. We've really got what we think are some really good quality applicants this time. We just tested last week. We're doing backgrounds, I think on about 18, right now for four slots. So we're in a pretty good spot right now. Chairman Mitch Johnson said, fantastic.

Councilmember David McClain said, you said we're trending down. Were you talking about the West End or the city as a whole? Chief Elliot said, the crime across the city as a whole is down. The past three years, the crime has trended down. 2020 was a peak, especially for homicides in the city and we contributed our homicides, generally 98 to 99 percent, are due to drug related activities and then that one percent is domestic. That's typically the way it's been for many, many years. And that's typically the way it is across country. So, we know the drug problem is a problem not only in our community but other communities across the country, but we do take a very aggressive approach in tackling that problem and those associated in that kind of activity. We have the Drug Task Force, the Gang Task Force and then we have our Federal Task Force officers that are actually taking cases to Federal Court. We did 107 federal adoptions last year and those individuals get sentenced in Federal Court. It's a day for day, so if you get a 20 year sentence you're doing 20 years. They're not hitting the revolving door and coming back out at a fraction of the time. That program, we're seeing the dividends of getting the habitual people off the street that really need to be off the street. These aren't your first time offenders getting in trouble and going to the federal penitentiary, it's the ones with the lengthy record and usually it's a lengthy violent record that we're taking off the streets and putting them in the federal system. Councilmember David McClain said, let me ask this, I'm not sure how many we've had. However many we've had in terms of car thefts. Like somebody has their car running in the morning to warm their car up, how is that trending? Is that up or down? I know that's a seasonal thing. Chief Elliot said, yes for one that is correct that is seasonal. We did have an increase in that. Vehicle break-ins, that's an ongoing thing. The word break in, that's people leaving their vehicle unlocked but that's still a felony. We still battle that just like every other city in the country. You know, if you have valuables lock them up, take your guns out at night. But on the good side, thanks to technology, two or three weeks ago we cleared 25 B and E's with the camera

technology. So we ended up with suspect vehicle, we were able to track it through the video, moving throughout the town, and cleared I think 25 plus cases. Again, bad things are going to happen, you know, we can't prevent certain criminal things from happening necessarily, but we can make sure and bring a good resolution to it by putting them in jail.

Chairman Mitch Johnson said, Chief Hamrick, anything from fire? Fire Chief Marty Hamrick approached the podium and said, do ya'll have any questions for me? I know I haven't sent out our end of year report yet, but I can kind of give you a synopsis of what we experienced last year. Unlike the crime rate, the fire and the EMS side of it, we're increasing. We ran over 3,200 calls last year which was about 1,500 more than the previous year. We're seeing a big uptick in medical runs. We do a lot more of those now to assist the EMS companies and hopefully free them up and keep them available. We run a lot of lift assist, which sometimes is not a medical emergency. It may just be lifting an elder person up off of the floor that fell out of the bed or something like that. But, we're happy to provide those services when we can. We're working to get all of our positions filled that ya'll allowed us to take on this past December. We're going to do an emergency test, well not an emergency, we're going to move up our testing period to April, so we've already exhausted our hirer list so we're going to have to work on another one so we can finish out those 12 and then the retirees that we've had over the year. Any question that you would have for me at this point? Chairman Mitch Johnson said, we appreciate your efforts. I wanted to take the opportunity while we had a short agenda just to touch base with you guys and get some updates on how things were progressing.

Councilmember David McClain said, the last thing I was going to say, can we get a plan or outline of what Vector plans to do this year? I know they said they were working with ASU and whatever has come with that and figure out what the plan is for this year. Chairman Mitch Johnson said, seems like the last time I touched base with Jim, he was going to be available for March or April, either one, so let me circle back with him and see if he can come and visit with us. I don't know where they are with the ASU thing. I think that was something he was wanting to work with the mayor on.

Councilmember Chris Moore said, Mr. Chair, when I just MapQuest 501 Puryear, the house that we addressed earlier. That address falls on a brand new construction. A house that's under construction. Is that a misprint in the address, Darrel, do you think, or Scott or somebody? I was double checking our notes here and when I MapQuest 501 it comes to the new house being built on the southwest corner of Puryear. Chairman Mitch Johnson said, when you read the resolution, the legal description says the south 64 feet of Lot 1, Block 1 of the Wilson Addition. Councilmember Chris Moore said, that's about how big that lot is. I just double check as we go, and like I say, when I MapQuest that address it falls on the southwest corner, and there's been a new house under construction there for almost a year. Councilmember LJ Bryant said, is that the Orr's house, is that right? That's at that corner. Councilmember Chris Moore said, it's a red brick house with a wraparound front porch. Code Enforcement Director Scott Roper approached the podium and said, this house is free standing. I've personally be at that house. I will double check that but I am certain that 501 is correct. Councilmember Chris Moore said, ok. Councilmember LJ Bryant said, yeah Google seems to have it one block to the south of the corner. Google and MapQuest may conflict each other. Councilmember Chris Moore said, I just wanted to make sure we didn't have an error.

Chairman Mitch Johnson said, Mr. Roper, while you're up would you like to give us a quick update of how things are going in your department? Director Scott Roper said, yeah, we're excited we have a great team. I think, last year, you'll see with the

numbers that we actually had 130 properties that were removed. Vast majority of those being residential. I believe we had cases on 110 of them. What we found, is we're getting a lot more assistants with folks just taking them down without our involvement, which is great. We had 130 last year and I think 110 the year before. There was a number of those on the West Side as well, but they are everywhere, they're not just in one central location. Prior to us getting back into this condemnations, there had been one property taking down, since I took over, that was under an emergency clause and that was back during the tornado. It just wasn't a priority and we've made it a priority, because obviously blight and issues come up with dilapidated houses and people living in them. So, we are really trying to make that one of our priorities. As well, we also have another officer that deals primarily with Planning and Zoning issues, with fences and pool enclosures, and I'm trying to get back on track that way. It's been a really good relationship with Planning and Zoning and also Inspections, so what I think we've seen is a really good team effort from Inspections, Planning and Code as well as Sanitation because we started about a year and a half ago we started doing these roll-off dumpsters and that has become a huge success as well. We done roughly 95 tons last year that we collected. We're going to continue to do that every month and we're very proud of what we have been able to do and what has gotten accomplished. It's a team effort and I mean that city wide not just Code Enforcement.

Councilmember LJ Bryant said, Mr. Roper, how do you handle the seasonal influx of all the mowing complaints? That must be over whelming for ya'll. Director Scott Roper said, it is but it's what we do. What happens is, this time of year we can focus on other complaints. When mowing hits it hits hard and fast and furious. You know were going to have rain and then it's going to grow and that's going to increase our call volume but that's part of the job and part of what we do. We just find a way to get it done. The mayor's been very supportive with personnel. We increased another officer last year so that has certainly helped us in the direction that we're going. You know with the grass it's just, especially when you get a few days rain and then the heat, we deal with it. Councilmember LJ Bryant said, well I'm no attorney so I can come up with illegal ideas, but I've always wished John Street and some of those guys could get out there, Reserved Officers or something, if you could train them or something in the summer to go out and help you or something.

Councilmember Chris Moore said, I would be curious to know. Did you notice once we increased the fines on the mowing, did it reduce the number of yards? Director Scott Roper said, no they did not. It has reduced the same people. Councilmember Chris Moore said, the repeat offenders? Director Scott Roper said, yes that has settled.

That's a pretty good pop and we have seen a significant decrease in repeat offenders. But, some offenders are just going to do it and pay it and use us as their mowing company, but it's costing them a lot more thanks to ya'll. Councilmember Chris Moore said, well and I think that's a good plan, and Carol always says we have to justify our cost but our cost is ever increasing. We need to review our fine structure again.

Director Scott Roper said, each time we're at a property we log how long we're there. We can easily justify how many times we have to go by there. Councilmember Chris Moore said, I looked the other day and it's been two years since we increased the fine structure, so I know our cost has gone up, we might consider it again in order to further help you. Just let us know. Director Scott Roper said, thank you.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

8. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Chris Moore, seconded by Brian Emison, that this

meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant