

1. Call to order.

Councilmember Avila Farias called the meeting to order at 6:25 p.m. in the Board Room.

Present: AnaMarie Avila Farias, Councilmember
Michael Menesini, Vice Mayor
Acting Police Chief Eric Ghisletta

2. Neighborhood and business district public safety concerns.

The Subcommittee and Acting Chief Ghisletta discussed the homeless issue in the downtown, including numbers, the outreach program, responding to concerns from downtown businesses and/or individuals, raising public awareness about the Public Safety Subcommittee's purpose and role in dealing with related issues, and past crimes in Martinez that affected the public's feeling of wellbeing.

Shannon Smith asked what protocol should be followed in the event of a community disaster; Councilmember Menesini explained what procedures are in place. Acting Chief Ghisletta reviewed options available for those who are left temporarily homeless after such an emergency, and ways that individuals can get certified to help others in those circumstances.

Dana Guzzetti recommended that the Subcommittee look into the City of Concord's homeless program.

Acting Chief Ghisletta responded to additional questions/comments from the Subcommittee regarding the current homeless population, graffiti, and police cameras in public areas.

3. Crime Stat updates.

Acting Chief Ghisletta presented the staff report. He also responded to comments and questions from the Subcommittee and the public regarding definitions of terms used in the report, how the data was presented, implications of the data, suggestions for clarifying the information, jurisdictional issues stating that residential burglaries are down, but commercial burglaries are on the rise, juvenile activities, revenue from parking citations, how that revenue is divided between the City and other agencies, and potential privatization of the meter service.

Tom Greerty commented that there should be no parking meters downtown.

Richard Verrilli commented on the increase in parking citations, and expressed concern about the impact of the increased fees. Vice Mayor Menesini mentioned the impact on downtown businesses if parking becomes an issue to shopping there. Chief Ghisletta stated that one reason for the increase was due to additional staffing, which means greater awareness and more citations.

Chief Ghisletta also discussed how the revenue from parking citations is divided between the City and other agencies, and potential privatization of the meter service.

4. Overview of Neighborhood Policing Strategy.

Acting Chief Ghisletta presented the staff report, discussing the background, rationale for the program, flexibility of the program when applied to each individual neighborhood, and information on the City's website. The Subcommittee also discussed additional items/improvements that could be made to the website.

5. Crime prevention initiatives; current, new and developing ones.

Acting Chief Ghisletta presented this report also, commenting on the important role of the public in calling the police and letting them know of crimes committed or unsafe circumstances, as well as for the Police Department in raising public awareness through outreach to schools. He also discussed resources available on the website for tracking incidents and police response, not to mention ways that the public can help in solving crime.

Councilmember Avila Farias commented on the need for current and accurate information when dealing with child abductions and so that the public can serve as an additional resource. She also mentioned her desire to enhance the safety of all children in Martinez and in preventing abductions altogether. She discussed new technologies and new programs being used in other jurisdictions, as well as additional training opportunities for police officers.

Vice Mayor Menesini noted that parental child abductions in custody conflicts following divorce are more common than stranger abductions. Councilmember Avila Farias agreed, but said she was interested in seeing how the different technologies can be used to deter or resolve future incidents.

Shannon Smith commented on a pilot project for interim care providers, and she indicated a willingness to bring more information and possibly assist in implementing.

The Subcommittee and Chief discussed specific instances when cell phone use/data was helpful in resolving child disappearances.

Jim Dexter, recent Martinez resident, commented on a program (Nixle) in Oakland allowing cell phone users to have alerts automatically sent to them when circumstances arise, in order to get the word out quickly and improve the likelihood of a positive outcome. Chief Ghisletta indicated that Martinez was using those alerts as well. Councilmember Avila Farias asked that information on the program be provided at a future meeting.

6. Public Comment (Items not on the agenda)

Rich Verrilli commented on the marijuana ordinance, and he expressed concern that it would be difficult to change or remove the permissions granted once it is in place. He noted that if it is added as part of the Zoning Ordinance, as proposed, the rights run with the land, not the user. Vice Mayor Menesini responded that the Zoning Ordinance can be changed, although he acknowledged the process is somewhat cumbersome because the change would have to be approved by the Planning Commission first.

Tom Greerty expressed concern as well that the City could be opening itself up for lawsuits if the right is granted and then revoked. Vice Mayor Menesini explained the purpose of the law was to address the industrial-sized grows that are already existing in residential areas, and even if a plant is legal, a jurisdiction has the right to regulate plant grows that are offensive to other people.

Vice Mayor Menesini said he thought an outright ban was best also, although he acknowledged that concern for those who need medical marijuana was a valid point. He cautioned the Subcommittee also about the potential rise in crime that could result if the grows are not carefully monitored and the restrictions enforced, based on the potential value of the plants for those who want to use it illegally. He cautioned the Subcommittee about unintended consequences. He expressed appreciation for the compassion of the Subcommittee, for them being willing to hear more about the issue, and for the good work the Subcommittee is doing to ensure the safety of the community.

Kit Greerty noted that there are many valid ways to control pain other than medicinal marijuana.

Councilmember Avila Farias commented on a recent court decision that may make it better for Martinez to enact a ban, at least until a change is made. She indicated willingness to reconsider the ordinance, if the rest of the Council agrees. Vice Mayor Menesini said he was willing to discuss it further at the next Council meeting.

7. Adjournment.

The Public Safety Subcommittee meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.