

1. Call to Order

Councilmember AnaMarie Avila Farias called to order at 6:32 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

Present: AnaMarie Avila Farias, Councilmember Debbie M^cKillop, Councilmember and Manjit Sappal, Chief of Police

Agenda Item #11 taken out of order.

11. Public Comment. (Under Government Code 54954.3, members of the public have the right to address the Committee on any item not on the agenda; however, the Committee may not take any action.)

Julian Frazer discussed the homeless issue, saying there is no excuse for not enforcing the problems. He added that when the public calls the police dispatch, they should be treated with respect.

Eli Hernandez commented on police officers not being professional to the public.

2. Assistance with Creating a Citywide Email Distribution List for Crime Alert Bulletins

Police Chief Manjit Sappal explained the purpose for creating a crime alert list and indicated those interested should contact Renee Jacobs (rjacobs@cityofmartinez.org) to be added to the list.

Eli Hernandez commented on his experiences with crime in the community and how it has gotten worse overall. He asked whether this program would address cybercrime as well. He also asked about Neighborhood Watch programs.

Councilmember Avila Farias commented on other technology that is available and whether there can be an interactive link on the City's website. Chief Sappal discussed the possibilities for the future.

There was some discussion with the audience of the types of software and how it can be used. Concern was also expressed about security of the information given by the public and potential hackers.

3. Community Academy

Chief Sappal provided an overview of the former Citizens Academy now called the Community Academy.

Councilmember Debbie M^cKillop asked how many people would be involved in the first class and how it will be promoted, which Chief Sappal discussed.

Councilmember Avila Farias expressed optimism about the possibilities and discussed curriculum used by other jurisdictions.

Chief Sappal responded to questions/comments from the public and Subcommittee members regarding efforts to draw from a cross-section of the community who will lead the classes, and how academy members can be used to assist the Police Department. He acknowledged as well that there is a volunteer program with the Police and its functions are slightly different than this one. He also acknowledged there would be some screening of individuals before they can work as volunteers because public safety is paramount.

Councilmember M^cKillop discussed her experience with the Citizens Academy and the opportunity to see behind the scenes of the Police Department and its functions.

Eli Hernandez stated he has friends in the federal government who might be willing to help.

4. Crime Prevention Outreach

Chief Sappal commented on the purpose of crime prevention as well as enforcement efforts, including home security assessments.

Councilmember Avila Farias discussed social media tools such as Facebook and the Next Door application, which provides information for specific neighborhoods.

Councilmember M^cKillop added that any real-time information provided can help neighborhoods be more aware.

Chief Sappal reported on information that will be available on the website in the future, such as the daily crime log and neighborhood specific information.

5. Downtown Homelessness Issue update

Chief Sappal presented the staff report noting there are no illusions the City will be able to end homelessness permanently in the downtown given Martinez has the County jail, but he assured everyone the police will do their best to manage the situation for the greater good. He discussed how methods are specifically tailored to the individual neighborhoods that are affected.

Councilmember M^cKillop asked for clarification on geographic probation orders, which Chief Sappal addressed.

Councilmember Avila Farias asked how many individuals the City is currently dealing with and Chief Sappal explained it is probably less than everyone thinks. He also discussed how homeless counts are done.

Councilmember Avila Farias commented on efforts made by the City to deal with the issue, both in the past and ongoing. She acknowledged the financial challenges that have caused more people/families to be affected, and noted the Council is not trying to be insensitive or uncaring toward those in need.

An unidentified female speaker asked for clarification on the numbers of homeless in Martinez. Chief Sappal reviewed the actual figures for total homeless (+200) and persistent individuals who are creating a problem in the downtown (20-30). The speaker expressed concern the homeless are being blamed for all the problems in the downtown, when some of them existed before the issue of homelessness arose.

Chief Sappal commented on efforts the City is making to meet the needs of the homeless as well as ensuring public safety in the downtown. He agreed some of the criminal behavior comes from non-homeless who are intoxicated or otherwise unable to conduct themselves in a public setting.

Debbie Gomes discussed her work with the elderly, Alzheimer's, hospice, dementia and others in need, as well as her own experiences being homeless. She asked for more compassion, time, resources, and understanding of those who are so often ignored or invisible.

Rebecca Alvarez acknowledged there are homeless people who need and would appreciate a helping hand, but she expressed concern about those who are belligerent and aggressive, especially in the parks and around children.

Chief Sappal explained the police are focusing on behavior and asked the public to assist by reporting criminal behavior when it is observed.

Eli Hernandez discussed his desire and efforts to open a homeless shelter in the City. He encouraged everyone to not judge on appearance and to offer assistance when able.

Laura Saltes was concerned about inadequate lighting in some areas of the downtown, which creates public safety risks. She noted people are looking for reassurance that the problem is being addressed.

Councilmember Avila Farias commented on the resources which have been expended and expressed confidence that the new Chief is capable and rapidly becoming aware of the problems. She acknowledged it is a quality of life issue and there needs to be a balance between compassion and public safety.

Chief Sappal agreed there is a plan in place and discussed differences between those who are temporarily homeless from unexpected circumstances and those who are chronically homeless.

(Julian Frazer made comments off-mic.)

6. Evaluation of Neighborhood Policing Areas

Chief Sappal noted currently there are 24 neighborhood areas, but the goal is to reduce the number to four with greater crime analysis/prevention goals and consistent email contact. He discussed the current program and how it would be changed and improved.

Susan Gustafson expressed appreciation for the program and the options for the public. She commented on pros and cons of using social media and the need to teach the public how to become part of the solution rather than just complain about issues.

Eli Hernandez commented on drug use in his neighborhood and other criminal activities and how to build trust between the community and the police.

7. Traffic Enforcement/Motor Officer Deployment

Chief Sappal discussed the need to improve traffic enforcement, perhaps with increased staffing. He noted Martinez is part of a regional traffic team to address area-wide issues.

An unidentified speaker commented on increasing traffic issues on Alhambra. He indicated area-wide issues need attention, but traffic safety in Martinez needs to be a priority also.

Another speaker made comments off-mic.

Julian Frazer expressed concern about cars parking partly on the sidewalk, which causes problems for pedestrians. He also commented on the need for greater red curbs near a new development on Shell Avenue.

Susan Gustafson suggested investing in a speed monitoring unit that shows drivers what the speed limit is and how fast they are going in comparison. She also encouraged people to read and comment on the General Plan update, which is a good forum to address parking overall.

Eli Hernandez discussed speeding in his neighborhood and concerns with public safety and noise violations. He asked for greater enforcement of both.

Councilmember Avila Farias responded to Ms. Gustafson's suggestion about the speed monitoring, noting the City has one unit that is moved from neighborhood to neighborhood. She indicated residents can call and request monitoring in specific areas. She also discussed ways the City can be more walkable from infrastructure improvements. She asked the Chief about parking issues/traffic congestion near schools.

Chief Sappal discussed plans to increase traffic enforcement including speed limits. He invited comments/suggestions from the public and specific areas of concern.

There was brief discussion of parking/traffic issues near John Swett Elementary School.

8. Volunteers in Policing

This item was covered in the discussion on the Community Academy.

9. Neighborhood Update

Chief Sappal had no opening remarks except to note the item was partially covered under other items discussed.

A member of the public asked about code enforcement staffing to more effectively address the complaints. Councilmember Avila Farias discussed the history of the position and whether public safety or building code issues were greater.

In response to comments by Greg Thomas, there was brief discussion on home repair violations and enforcement.

Eli Hernandez expressed concern about building safety issues on Green Street, as well as drug activity in the Richardson/Ward/Escobar area.

10. Martinez Municipal Code Amendments: 9.56.010 - Sleeping in Vehicles ; amend language 8.26.020 - Unlawful Camping; amend language 9.50.010 - Refusal to Leave a Commercial Establishment; amend language Martinez Municipal Code Additions: Urinating and Defecating in Public; Carrying Dangerous Weapons

Chief Sappal presented the staff report, reviewing the Municipal Code amendments and additions to the Municipal Code.

The Subcommittee listened and responded to public comment regarding types of protective weapons that can be carried, how displayed/used, legal ramifications, the process for reviewing and discussing recommendations before it goes to Council.

After some discussion, the Subcommittee asked staff to provide the amendments to the Subcommittee for their review and input. If there are significant changes, there will be a special meeting of the Subcommittee. If not, the amendments will be brought to the City Council for review and action.

12. Adjournment

The Subcommittee thanked the public for attending and welcomed the new Police Chief.

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.