



WORK SESSION of the Greenbelt City Council held Monday, June 16, 2003, for the purpose of holding a stakeholder meeting with State's Attorney Glenn Ivey.

Mayor Davis started the meeting at 8:15 p.m. It was held in the Council Room of the Municipal Building.

PRESENT WERE: Council members Edward V.J. Putens, Rodney M. Roberts, Thomas X. White and Mayor Judith F. Davis.

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; James Craze, Police Chief; Celia Craze, Director of Planning and Community Development; Mike Craddock, Daniel O'Neil and Tom Kemp, Police Lieutenants; and David E. Moran, Assistant to the City Manager.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Glenn Ivey, State's Attorney; Justin Ross, State Delegate; Silke Pope and Mary Crawford, Public Safety Advisory Committee; Molly Lester, Nancy Ross, Barbara Foreman, and Joel Rubenstein.

Code Enforcement Issues

Ms. Craze described the City's code enforcement program. She indicated that sometimes when the City has to take court action, there is difficulty getting judges to take these issues seriously. Ms. Craze stated that the goal was to work together with the State's Attorney to prepare good cases and ultimately correct the problem. Mr. Ivey responded that he wanted to make sure Assistant State's Attorneys (ASAs) and code enforcement personnel worked together to prepare cases. He indicated that if there were any problems with ASAs, City staff could contact him directly.

Ms. Craze noted that one problem was ASAs negotiating a plea without consulting City staff. She also indicated there is a problem enforcing abatements. Mr. Ivey indicated that he had given explicit instructions that pleas should be discussed with municipal code enforcement officers. He also expressed a willingness to work together with municipalities on the abatement issue.

Mr. White asked about College Park's experience with zoning enforcement. Mr. Ivey responded that he did not have information on this topic, but he would check. There was discussion about the City's desire to gain zoning enforcement authority as well as additional zoning powers.

The next issue discussed was judges and how best to approach them about taking these cases seriously. Mr. Ivey agreed to help facilitate a contact with the judges, but he commented that this issue should be handled with a "great deal of finesse."

Ms. Craze stated that the City had great success recently in prosecuting some failures to license. She credited Mr. Ivey's new procedures and spirit of cooperation for this success.

Reconsideration of Sentencing by Judges

Mayor Davis reported on the Sears case, where a sentence had been reduced, and asked Mr. Ivey what could be done about this. Mr. Ivey stated that his position was clear on opposing these reductions. He stated that there have been unsuccessful efforts in the past to pursue a legislative remedy. He also stated that the judges can impose restrictions on themselves and there had been some discussions about this. Mr. Roberts expressed concern that the state's sentences on violent crimes were weak as compared nationally. Mr. Ivey responded that in his experience with first degree murder cases, his office seeks the death penalty or life without parole. He stated that violence in Prince George's County was over the top. Mr. Roberts asked if lack of jail space was a problem. Mr. Ivey responded he had inquired with the Department of Corrections and that there was plenty of space.

Auto Theft

Mr. Ivey stated that auto theft was a serious problem in the county. He stressed that there needed to be a sentences imposed for these thefts. He also noted that of 15,000 car thefts in a year, about a third had keys in the car, and indicated more education was needed.

Police Issues

Chief Craze noted that during the Sears case there was access to a State's Attorney. Chief Craze requested access to a State's Attorney when a homicide occurs. Mr. Ivey responded that his office would set that up.

Next, the Chief asked about the Stet Docket. Mr. Ivey responded that under a new policy his office was eliminating the Stet Docket in most cases.

Chief Craze asked about the thresholds for drug cases. Mr. Ivey responded that it often depends on what the drug experts will testify to. He also indicated that the sentencing guidelines were only suggestive. He also reported that a drug court was being established.

The next issue discussed was Greenbelt Police officers "acting as agents" on private property. Chief Craze stated this program was very successful. However, he noted there were problems enforcing similar actions on public property such as Roosevelt Center. Mr. Ivey noted that there was a good deal of constitutional law on this subject and that the City needed to proceed carefully.

Chief Craze asked if a waiting room could be established at the court house for victims and police officers and other witnesses testifying in cases. Mr. Ivey indicated that he has some rooms in his office and could make those available. Scheduling of cases was

discussed. Mr. Ivey responded that this was a difficult problem, given the volume of cases.

The Chief asked for an updated organizational chart. Mr. Ivey responded that this was a reasonable request that he could accommodate.

Chief Craze indicated that sometimes municipal police departments are overlooked in policy decisions. Mr. Ivey agreed that this issue should be addressed.

Street/Intersection Vendors and Signs

Mayor Davis stated that this was a nuisance and safety problem. Mr. Ivey responded that there are laws in place. He noted that certain types of speech are protected, but he thought that panhandling and commercial activity could be prohibited. Mr. Ivey suggested that the City contact the County Attorney. Mayor Davis noted that small signs (snipe signs) attached to telephone polls, street signs, etc., were very unattractive. Mr. Ivey responded that any regulation needs to be enforced consistently regardless of which group is involved.

Pedestrian Safety

Mr. Ivey stated that the effort was ad hoc in certain locations and he had not seen a county-wide effort. He suggested that the City contact the County Executive. Mr. White asked if the State's Attorney's office was seeing cases involving crosswalk violations. Council expressed a desire to see the State's Attorney's office take these cases seriously.

Other Issues

Mr. Ivey stated that his office was trying to reach out to municipal law enforcement agencies. He also stressed the need for community involvement and listed several initiatives that his office was working on. Mayor Davis responded that Greenbelt had a strong volunteer spirit and asked Mr. Ivey to keep the City informed.

Mayor Davis thanked Mr. Ivey for meeting with the Council. Mr. Ivey thanked Council.

The meeting ended at 9:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Moran
Assistant to the City Manager