



**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
held Wednesday, January 28, 1998.**

The meeting began at 8:15pm. It was held in the Senior Conference Room/Gallery of the Community Center.

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

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Michael P. McLaughlin, City Manager; David E. Moran, City Clerk and James Craze, Chief of Police.

ALSO PRESENT WERE: Jack Johnson, State's Attorney; Dorrie Epilito, Assistant State's Attorney; Bill Manico, Chief of the Homicide Unit; Sheldon Goldberg and Kerana Todorov, Gazette Newspapers

Mr. Johnson began by outlining some of his policies. He stressed a no tolerance for guns policy and a tough stand on violence in the schools. He stated that repeat offenders are jailed and are not on the streets. Mr. Johnson also stressed proactive crime prevention programs and a focus on quality of life issues. He reported that overall crime hit a 5-year low and homicides were down significantly.

Mr. Manico described the homicide unit. He reported a closure rate of 72% of homicides and a conviction rate of over 90%. He praised the relationship with the Greenbelt Police. Mr. Manico noted inaccurate articles have appeared in the media in the past.

Mr. Roberts asked about the status of the Julie Ferguson case. Mr. Manico responded that the case is still being investigated, but there are no active leads, witnesses or physical evidence and that is the nature of homicide cases.

Mr. White asked how the office pursued legislative initiatives. Mr. Johnson responded that he surveys his attorneys for legislative needs and works closely with the State's Attorney's Association and the Police Department to develop initiatives. He announced that his office was pursuing legislation for the home detention program.

Ms. Davis asked about gang activity. Ms. Epilito stated there were no formal gangs in Greenbelt. There is a group of "wanna-bees" in Springhill Lake engaged in some graffiti activities. She described the different philosophy and procedures for handling juvenile crimes. Ms. Davis asked about the kind of crimes where juveniles can be charged as adults. Ms. Epilito responded that handgun crimes, violent felonies, rape and murders were examples that might be tried as adults.

Mr. Putens asked about legislation that would charge gang members equally. There was discussion about a State version of the Federal "Rico" legislation. Council expressed a desire to work with the State's Attorney's office to pursue this in a future legislative program.

Mr. Turnbull asked if gang association was taken into account when making prosecutorial decisions. Mr. Johnson responded that there was a State effort to get certain individuals off the streets.

Council discussed the success of the School Resource Officer program and the new central booking program.

Council expressed concern about judicial enforcement of the city's handbill ordinance. Mr. Johnson notified Council that one attorney (Ian Petesky) was handling municipal infractions. Mr. Johnson suggested that the city notify him the next time a handbill case was in court and he would follow-up. He also suggested that municipalities may want to talk with the judges about municipal infractions at their monthly meeting.

Chief Craze expressed concern that suspects who fail to appear (FTA) were placed on the Sted docket. Mr. Johnson responded that in an FTA the defendant should be pursued.

Mr. Johnson reported that he was not able to obtain the specifics on the embezzlement case and indicated that he would get the specifics and get back to the city with an answer. Mr. Johnson stated that their caseload last year was 36,500.

There was discussion regarding the commissioner system. Mr. Manico noted that the commissioner system needs to be reformed. Commissioners are appointed by the Court system and can charge people with crimes, but do not need any legal training or background. Council believed there needed to be training and qualifications for commissioners and directed staff to raise this issue at the legislative dinner.

Mr. White asked if the office was doing anything with aggressive driving issues. Mr. Johnson indicated that the State's Attorneys Association was pursuing legislation and agreed to provide the city with a copy. Mr. Johnson noted that vehicular homicide is the largest killer in the county and the state.

Mr. Putens stressed the city's willingness to support legislative initiatives. Mr. Johnson stated he would provide the city with their legislative package.

Mayor Davis thanked everyone for coming and Mr. Johnson thanked Council for the opportunity to speak with them.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

David E. Moran