
SITKA POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 3rd, 2007 – 7:00 P.M.
Harrigan Centennial Hall

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Chair Daniels called the meeting to order at 7:08 pm.

B. ROLL CALL

Present:	Mr. Dennie Daniels	Ms. Gwen Lazzarini
	Mr. Michael Wise	Ms. Gail Roderick
Others Present:	Sheldon Schmitt	- Police Chief
	Dave Swearingen	- Assistant Fire Chief
	Judy Puckett	- Traffic Officer
	Sherri Fahey	- Member of the public

The Chair said that Fire Chief Elmer emailed the members about his absence from this evening's meeting.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – DEC. 6TH, 2006 MEETING

MOTION: M/S **Lazzarini/Roderick** moved to approve the minutes from the Dec. 6th, 2006 meeting.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED 3-0-1** on a roll call vote with Daniels abstained. Mr. Daniels explained that he was absent from the previous month's meeting.

D. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Chief Schmitt requested an opportunity to discuss the proposed Regional Justice Center. The Chair added this item under New Business.

E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

F. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair mentioned the email from Mr. John Litten who requested that in his absence, the parking for tour buses is not taken away as buses circling around and around the downtown area without a good chance of having a place to unload and reload will cause major congestion. This was further taken up under Old Business.

G. REPORTS

- 1. Chairperson - None**
- 2. Vice Chairperson - None**

3. Police Chief Schmitt

At the outset, Chief Schmitt expressed concern about the meeting schedule during the first Wednesday of the month which doesn't give City Staff enough time to put together their monthly reports. He said he will email out an annual report at a later time. The members acknowledged the time crunch City Staff are faced with and said that they don't mind getting the reports later in the month through email or in the next meeting.

Chief Schmitt drew the members' attention to his written report for the month of December and highlighted the following:

- The Department was proactive during the holiday season at DUI prevention by going on the Problem Corner to raise awareness, releasing PSA's, and having volunteers provide rides for people on New Year's Eve.
- The Department completed its hiring process for three police officer positions. Andrew Hunt and Charles Estes have accepted the job offers and begun the 12-week Field Training Program. They will also be attending the Public Safety Academy at the end of February.

On the Chair's question about the K-9 unit, Chief Schmitt said they have raised \$16,000 but it will only be good for the initial year. They targeted \$40,000 to cover the maintenance of the unit for the next three years. He said he is meeting with staff to decide whether to go forward with the project or not given the fact that the K-9 training is coming up in the next few months. The Chair offered to join their meeting.

On Ms. Lazzarini's question regarding the fingerprint scanning system, Chief Schmitt expressed optimism that they will get it in the next couple of months. The Department has \$31,000 in hand but the equipment costs \$40,000. He said they have already identified the funding source for the balance.

4. Acting Fire Chief Swearingen

Acting Fire Chief Swearingen told the members about the Firefighter I training course which concluded last December and paved the way for SFD's accreditation by the State to teach Firefighter I training classes. These classes will broaden the opportunity for fire volunteers to gain certification.

He also briefly spoke about a structural fire caused by an exploding lithium battery and mentioned the statistics for the month of November.

H. OLD BUSINESS

1. DeGroff St.

The members briefly exchanged their observations about the traffic flow on DeGroff St. after the barricades were taken down, noting that the street is not getting as much traffic as it did before which they tentatively attributed to the double fines. Chief Schmitt said that the double fines can continue indefinitely. He also assured the members that he will get the number of citations issued when the double fines was imposed.

Ms. Lazzarini suggested moving the sign closer to the entrance of DeGroff St. to increase visibility to drivers coming from Sawmill Creek Road. Chief Schmitt said he will speak with PW Superintendent Bergman.

2. Swan Lake Crosswalk Update

The Chair suggested that they wait for the FY08 proposed budget which the Administration is expected to submit to the Assembly in February. This item will remain on the agenda for updates.

3. Tour Bus Parking on Lincoln St.

Ms. Puckett outlined the legislative history of the tour bus parking ordinance. To wit:

- May 9th, 1983 - Police & Fire Commission recommended to the Assembly that Maksoutoff St. from Lincoln to Harbor Drive be made a bus parking zone when the cruise ships are in.
- May 24th, 1983 - Assembly took public input and concerns; Motion failed; Mayor sought reconsideration.
- June 14th, 1983 - Assembly approved a motion to allow tour buses to park on the NBA side of Maksoutoff St. from the exit sign, continuing on Lincoln St. in front of the bank for a trial period of four weeks.
- April 21st, 1986 - City Staff recommended to the Police and Fire Commission to utilize a portion of the Castle Hill parking lot for permanent bus parking which shall be specially marked and signed.
- May. 5th, 1986 - John Litten explained to the Police and Fire Commission why the tour bus company prefers bus parking near the Russian Cathedral. He offered to work out an early morning parking with the understanding that they still retain the two spots in front of NBA on ship days.
- May 7th, 1986 - Police and Fire Commission recommended to the Administrator and Assembly to:
- (1) Allow the buses to use spaces on the south side of Lincoln St. between the hours of 7-9 am only, as space is available;
 - (2) Allow the continuation of the two spaces in front of NBA;
 - (3) Prohibit parking, loading or unloading of buses on Lincoln St. between 9 am and 6 pm with the exception of the two spaces mentioned in #2;
 - (4) Reserve and post spaces as necessary in the Castle Hill Parking lot as follows: Bus Parking Only, May 1 – Sept. 30 6 am to 4 pm
- May 13th, 1986 - Assembly approved Ordinance No. 86-710, as amended, to restrict bus parking on Lincoln St. on first reading.
- June 12th, 1986 - Police Chief Newell wrote Mr. Litten suggesting to leave the permanent signing, creating the restriction 7-9:30 am and allowing Prewitt Enterprises to place their portable signs in the area as needed.
- May 10th, 1991 - Police Chief Newell recommended to the City Administrator temporary changes in downtown bus parking by extending bus parking time on the seaward side of Lincoln St. until 11 am, per the request of the Retail Merchants Association.

Ms. Puckett further told the Commission that she can't recall any traffic accidents in the downtown area due to tour bus parking, noting that there is a collective effort to be cautious when driving downtown. She suggested that the Commission notify the downtown merchants about the possible changes to tour bus parking.

The members identified and discussed alternative parking areas such as parking in front of Radio Shack; near the Pioneer Home along Lincoln St.; in front of City Hall. They briefly talked about bus sizes, the pros and cons of changing the downtown traffic patterns, and the effects on businesses.

Ms. Fahey expressed the concern of Wells Fargo branch manager Lori Konoske about reduced visibility from the bank's exit to Maksoutoff St. and to Lincoln St. due to tour bus parking, and noted she has witnessed near misses in the area. She suggested moving tour bus parking in front of Ben Franklin.

Ms. Roderick offered to draft the letter to the Sitka Tribe of Alaska (STA), Mr. John Litten of Sitka Tours as well as to business owners, about the proposal to remove bus parking in front of Wells Fargo to the area near the Pioneers Home. She said she will also note that the transit bus parking in front of the 208 block will not be affected.

The Chair directed the Secretary to draft a public service announcement a week before the meeting to notify the public and invite them to participate in the meeting. He also requested Ms. Puckett to figure out the parking configuration for the proposed area near Pioneers Home and to provide the members the documentation of the legislative history she outlined earlier.

4. Maksoutoff St. Traffic Flow

The members agreed that this agenda item will be addressed in conjunction with the discussion on tour bus parking. They feel that the traffic flow on Maksoutoff St. is largely affected by tour bus parking.

5. STA Letter

The Chair noted that former Chair Dave Moore invited Ms. Perkins of STA to the meeting. The Commission did not receive any feedback from her.

Ms. Roderick told the members that she spoke with the village resident whose husband brought up the issues before the Tribe. Chief Schmitt pointed out that the City has responded to the complaints from the village which are brought up during their regular monthly meeting with the Tribe.

Ms. Lazzarini suggested tracing the paper trail on the City's response to the issues raised and informing STA Chair Widmark and Ms. Perkins about it.

The Chair said that he will talk to the City Administrator and ask him about the City's correspondence with STA regarding the issues raised.

I. NEW BUSINESS

1. Review of Commission By-laws

The Chair explained that the Bylaws provide that the Commission shall annually review the Bylaws at the first regular meeting in January.

MOTION: **M/S Daniels/Wise** moved to amend Article 4, Section 1 of the Bylaws to read as:
“Commission meetings shall be held at least once a month within the City and Borough of Sitka. (Chapter 2.19) Meeting shall normally take place at 7 PM on the FIRST [third] Wednesday of each month.”

ACTION: Motion **PASSED 4-0** on a roll call vote.

The Chair said the Bylaws included in the packet will be revised as moved and approved. The amended version will be brought back in the next meeting for final approval by the members.

2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Chair explained that the Bylaws provide that the Commission shall elect a chairperson and vice chairperson at the first regular meeting in the month of January. He thought that they should follow it, instead of waiting until the new member is appointed by the Assembly.

MOTION: **M/S Lazzarini/Wise** moved to nominate Mr. Daniels as Chairperson.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED by consensus.**

MOTION: **M/S Daniels/Lazzarini** moved to nominate Mr. Wise as Vice Chairperson.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED by consensus.**

3. Election of Primary and Secondary Liaison to the Police and Fire Departments

After a brief discussion on the respective roles of the primary and secondary liaisons, Mr. Wise and Ms. Lazzarini volunteered to be the primary and secondary liaisons respectively, to the Fire Department. Ms. Lazzarini and Mr. Daniels offered to do the same for the Police Department.

4. Regional Justice Center

Chief Schmitt gave the members the heads up on a forthcoming proposal which will be on the Assembly agenda to fund the hiring of a professional planning consultant to produce a cost estimate, feasibility and design study for a Regional Justice Center. He explained that there has been an ongoing dialogue during the past two years with STA and various Alaska State agencies to collaborate on the Regional Justice Center, a "one-stop shop" to house justice and social service agencies possibly including the Sitka Police Department. He sought the Commission's support on the project. He said he will provide more information about the project in the next meeting.

This agenda item will be back in the next month's meeting under old business.

J. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Chief Schmitt suggested bringing forward a letter to the Assembly recognizing the efforts of former member Dave Moore as Chair and member of the Police and Fire Commission.

Mr. Wise asked an update on the Tsunami Inundation Map which was mentioned by Fire Chief Elmer in the previous meetings. Mr. Swearingen said that Chief Elmer will be able to provide the information. On Mr. Wise's query about having a central dispatch center, Chief Schmitt said that they are trying to resolve it, noting the need to have a good communication between emergency response agencies.

The Chair and the members thanked Ms. Puckett for providing the information and invited her to the next meeting.

Mr. Wise said that he will be not available to attend next month's meeting.

K. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA ITEMS

Next Meeting Date: February 7th, 2007

Agenda items: Old Business

1. DeGroff St.
2. Swan Lake Crosswalk Update
3. Tour Bus Parking on Lincoln St./Maksoutoff Traffic Flow
4. STA letter
5. Regional Justice Center

L. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

PREPARED BY: MARIA FINKENBINDER
Contract Secretary