
SITKA POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION
Wednesday, February 7th, 2007 – 7:00 P.M.
Harrigan Centennial Hall

REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Daniels called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: Mr. Dennie Daniels Ms. Gwen Lazzarini
 Mr. Michael Wise Ms. Gail Roderick
 Mr. Joseph Reeves

Others Present: Lt. Garry McCrary - Representing the Police Chief
 Scott Elmer - Fire Chief
 Judy Puckett - Traffic Officer

Members of the public: John Litten - Sitka Tours
 Hugh Bevan
 Sherri Fahey
 Shirley Robards
 Robert Dennard

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – JAN. 3RD, 2007 MEETING

MOTION: M/S **Lazzarini/Roderick** moved to approve the minutes from the January 3rd, 2007 meeting.

DISCUSSION: Ms. Roderick offered a correction on page 5 of the minutes under “Election of Primary and Secondary Liaison”. The last sentence should read as “*Ms. Roderick [Lazzarini] and Mr. Daniels offered to do the same for the Police Department.*”

ACTION: Motion **PASSED unanimously** on a roll call vote, as amended.

D. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA

The Chair suggested adding “Signing of Commission Bylaws” under Old Business.

E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

F. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair mentioned that aside from the correspondence included in the packet, an email was sent to the Commission by Mr. Rick McElrath regarding DeGroff St. Mr. McCrary said that the Police Department received a letter from Ms. Judith Ozment regarding tour bus parking on Lincoln St.

G. REPORTS

1. Chairperson

The Chair gave the Board a summary of his contacts in the past month:

- Meeting with Chief Schmitt regarding the K-9 unit.
- Sprinkler Waiver Committee Meeting
- Meeting with the City Administrator regarding a letter of commendation for Mr. Moore for his work. The latter was contacted but declined.

2. Vice Chairperson - None

3. Lt. McCrary

Lt. McCrary informed the members that Chief Schmitt has been heavily involved in the negotiations with PSEA for the past three days and won't be able to attend tonight's meeting. The following were the highlights of the Police Chief's report:

- Three members of the Operations Division were guests at the High School and gave instruction in new investigative techniques being employed in the criminal justice field.
- Extra hours of patrol coverage were worked by officers being paid from a statewide Driving Under the Influence (DUI) and Seatbelt Saturation grant.
- The Department worked at DUI prevention and raising awareness by going on the Problem Corner, releasing PSA's, and having volunteers provide rides for people on New Year's Eve. They also worked with CHARR by providing taxi passes at the bars while officers provided free rides.
- There is an upward trend of sexual abuse and sexual assault cases since fall began.
- January saw 40 DV calls and 12 arrests related to DV, excluding sexual abuse cases received.
- SPD is still one position down and recruitment efforts are being made. The two officers in training won't be able to perform patrol duties independently until June after they successfully attend the AST Academy and complete their Field Training Program.
- The DV unit is involved in hosting training for members of the community and for this month, it will be held on Feb. 5th with the topic, "Mandated Reporting and Mandated Reporters".
- CID-COPS remains active and has been a very positive force for making sure children are not being left behind after witnessing, or being a victim of a domestic violence or violent case.
- The Emergency Response Vessel was temporarily down due to an engine sensor problem.
- Effective Feb. 1, 2007, the incarceration fee was increased from \$75/day plus 5% sales tax to a flat \$110/day in keeping with the Department of Corrections fees.

In response to a query from Ms. Lazzarini, Lt. McCrary told the Commission that the contract for the purchase of the Live Scan fingerprint system has been signed. They are waiting to get the final approval and they expect delivery of the unit in April.

On another query, the Police Lieutenant said that they are pleased to announce that they have raised sufficient funds to launch the program. They are working with the State to use their vendor contract to purchase a dog in the near future.

4. Fire Chief Scott Elmer

Drawing from his written report, Fire Chief Elmer gave the following update:

- They are applying for a grant with the US Forest Service for communications equipment and fire equipment for wildlands firefighting. The grant request is for \$13,680 and requires only a 10% cost share.
- They are currently working with the Electric Department to check on the feasibility of installing an electric boiler at the Fire Station in an attempt to reduce operating costs.

- The Fire Department will be requesting this coming fiscal year replacement of the older primary response ambulance which is 11 years old and due for replacement.
- They recently responded to a fuel oil leak at the Sitka Christian Center. The areas were attended to in cooperation with ADEC and clean up of the area is underway.
- The Alaska Raptor Center experienced a blowout of their 8" main water service line which caused flooding in the building. Latest update indicated that the Raptor Center got their plumbing fixed today.
- In 2006, the Department responded to 1,162 calls for assistance which does not include SAR calls which average 30-40 calls a year. In 2005, the Department responded to 1,269 calls.

H. OLD BUSINESS

1. DeGroff St.

The Chair noted that a second sign regarding the double fine was put up near the DeGroff St. entrance coming from Sawmill Creek Road. Members agreed to keep this item on the agenda for regular updates.

2. Swan Lake Crosswalk Update

The Chair said they are still waiting for the release of the proposed FY08 budget which is expected to be presented to the Assembly in March. This item will remain on the agenda for updates.

3. Tour Bus Parking on Lincoln St./Maksoutoff St. Traffic Flow

Ms. Lazzarini said that she raised the initial concern about tour buses blocking the view as one exits from the Wells Fargo drive-through but later learned that there are other people who had a similar concern. She also pointed out that a representative from Wells Fargo concurred with her observation and has suggested some changes in the tour bus parking policies.

Public Comments

Mr. Litten, owner of Sitka Tours, told the Commission that the parking situation on Lincoln St. has evolved over time as cruise ship visits grew from half-a-day in the 1980s to whole day. He pointed out that the only reason that the tour buses park on the main street is to provide easy access to the Church to their clients who are generally the elderly and physically-challenged. The tour buses are not taking up any parking spaces other than the designated spots.

On moving tour bus parking near the Pioneers Home, Mr. Litten said that it won't gain much safety-wise. It won't create hardship on their side but it would put more people on the crosswalks that could hold up traffic and buses will have to stay longer since the passengers have to walk another block. Further, he indicated that it is not a good location because the buses would be blocking the view for cars coming off Barracks St.

Responding to Commission queries, Mr. Litten explained that the buses do 30 minute stops and are equipped with radio to coordinate parking schedules. If there is no available stop in the designated area, the buses park at Centennial for 10 minutes before going back to Lincoln St.

Mr. Litten however agreed with the idea to make Maksoutoff St. one-way which he said would eliminate a lot of problems on that street.

Mr. Bevan presented his traffic flow concept for Lincoln St. which he said would provide additional pedestrian capacity while maintaining access for bus and delivery vehicles and for one-way

vehicular traffic. His proposal is to make Lincoln St. one-way in the direction towards City Hall between the Church and Katlian St. On the oceanside, a removable seasonal 5-foot sidewalk (made of expanded metal so drainage still functions) will be installed to extend the existing 8-foot sidewalk. Bus loading and unloading will be on the oceanside. On the upland side, sidewalk and parking will remain unchanged. He felt that there is no realistic way to widen the street.

Commenting on Mr. Bevan's concept, Mr. Litten pointed out that bus loading and unloading would be difficult if Lincoln St. is made one-way as proposed. He suggested changing the one-way direction towards the church.

Ms. Robards remarked that the current traffic configuration has always been this way and it works. A change to make Lincoln St. one-way street won't work.

Ms. Fahey pointed out that they are not against tour bus parking in front of Wells Fargo but they are worried about safety.

Commission Comments

Ms. Lazzarini stressed that she doesn't want to drop the issue unless somebody will say emphatically that changing the traffic configuration is unacceptable and a dead idea.

The Chair said that moving bus parking somewhere else will create new problems.

Mr. Wise concurred with the Chair but stressed that there is a problem yet they don't have an easy good solution.

No consensus was reached. This agenda item will come back in the next meeting.

4. STA Letter

The Chair told the members that the City Administrator has not responded to the STA letter regarding safety issues in the Sitka Indian Village.

Ms. Lazzarini felt that the Commission should formally respond to the letter by using the information provided by Fire Chief Elmer in a memo to the City Administrator date May 2006.

Mr. Elmer said that they need to update the information in that particular memo which was a response to a letter sent by STA a year ago to the City Administrator. He and Police Chief Schmitt did a walk through the village.

Ms. Roderick offered to write the letter on behalf of the Commission. At a later part of the meeting, the members agreed that it is worth mentioning in the letter about to get STA support for the purchase of the aerial apparatus which would really serve well in areas like Kaagwaantaan St.

5. Regional Justice Center Update

Lt. McCrary said that the Assembly agreed to provide \$75,000 to match a grant of \$75,000 from the State for the feasibility study of a Regional Justice Center. He said that Police Chief is very optimistic that it will happen. They feel that if they can show the feasibility and design, the project will generate more support.

6. Signing of the Bylaws

A revised version of the Commission Bylaws as amended in the previous meeting was passed around for the members to sign.

I. NEW BUSINESS

1. Aerial Apparatus

Chief Elmer discussed his plan to apply for grant funds from the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant (AFG) program to assist with the purchase of an aerial apparatus for Sitka. He explained that currently, the SFD does not have the ability to rescue anyone about the second floor of a building. The apparatus will allow firefighters to access the roof of buildings 2 stories or higher and areas with difficult terrain which he said will hugely improve their fire protection, rescue and extinguishment efforts. It will also increase the total number of points Sitka will receive from the Insurance Service Office and bring down home and business owners' insurance premium costs.

He spoke about the cost of the apparatus which ranges between \$700,000 and \$850,000 and how the City could come up with the required 50% match to the federal funds. He said SFD will be asking an additional \$20,400 in its annual budget for the maintenance, sinking fund, insurance and testing of the apparatus.

He expressed optimism that they will get the grant given the kind of terrain that Sitka has, the existence of structures of varying heights such as the St. Michael's Cathedral, Westmark Sitka, Pioneers Home that can't be protected with the current engines the City has, and the fact that Sitka is on an island. There won't be any back-up fire service from other communities. He pointed out that Sitka qualified last year for the grant money but the AFG program ran out of money before it got to Sitka's application.

On Mr. Wise's question about additional equipment, Mr. Elmer said that he doesn't foresee purchasing additional equipment since the equipment from the old engine will be transferred to the new ladder truck.

MOTION: **M/S Daniels/Lazzarini** moved to express support to the Fire Chief's proposal to pursue the Assistance to Firefighters Grant for the purchase of an aerial apparatus.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED unanimously** on a roll call vote.

2. Pherson St./Verstovia St. Parking

The Chair amended the name of the streets under discussion to Monastery St./Verstovia St. He explained that a citizen called him about cars parked at the intersection.

Ms. Puckett explained that the complaint stemmed from cars parked off the pavement in the intersection of Monastery and Verstovia Streets which the caller felt makes turning left from Verstovia St. going towards town very difficult. She suggested that the members drive through the area to validate the complaint.

The members concurred with Ms. Puckett's suggestion and agreed to bring back this agenda item to the next meeting.

J. COMMISSION COMMENTS

K. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA ITEMS

Next Meeting Date: March 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

MOTION: M/S Lazzarini/Reeves moved to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

PREPARED BY: MARIA FINKENBINDER
Contract Secretary