

**SITKA POLICE AND FIRE COMMISSION**  
**Wednesday April 2, 2008 – 7:00PM**  
**Harrigan Centennial Hall**

**REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

**B. ROLL CALL**

Present: Gail Roderick, Gwen Lazzarini, Michael Wise, Joseph Reeves  
Others Present: Police Chief Sheldon Schmitt, Fire Chief Scott Elmer  
Members of the Public: Traffic Officer Judy Puckett, Erica Knox

**C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**MOTION:** M/S **Wise/Lazzarini** moved to accept the minutes from the February 6, 2008 meeting.

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

**D. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS TO AGENDA**

Ms. Roderick mentioned that the Degroff St. item had been tabled, but that a resident may attend the meeting to speak on the subject.

Mr. Wise reported that he had a request from Kim Gleason, a resident of Wolff Dr., to put up a 15MPH speed limit sign on Wolff Dr. Ms. Roderick felt that this was a Public Works issue. Ms. Gleason was supposed to set up a meeting to get the request put on the agenda, but Mr. Wise noted that she never followed up with him. Mr. Wise recommended waiting until Ms. Gleason got back to the Commission before putting it on the agenda. All members were in agreement. In the meantime, Chief Schmitt said he would check in to what the speed limit is in that area.

**E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA**

None

**F. COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**G. REPORTS**

- **Chairperson**-No report.
- **Vice Chairperson**-No report.
- **Police Chief**-Chief Sheldon Schmitt reported the major incident for the month was the quadruple homicide, which resulted in the arrest of Jason Abbott, who has been charged with four counts of Murder in the First Degree and one count of Attempted Murder in the First Degree. Chief Schmitt stated that the case strapped the department's resources to the limit. It also involved Crime Scene Unit techs from the Alaska State Crime Detection Laboratory. Humanitarian follow up with the family was coordinated through various entities of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska. Chief Schmitt wanted to commend everyone involved with the case because they did a tremendous job and he is very proud of them.

Chief Schmitt reported that there were three other deaths reported this month: a self inflicted gunshot wound of a female, a man who fell into the water at the harbor, and a man who appeared to have died of natural causes. These cases remain open.

Chief Schmitt also reported that there were no events that were directly related to the herring fishery. There was a report of a stolen fishing vessel that was later recovered. The Department is looking to hire a temporary traffic officer to help during the summer season, and the mirror has been put up by Wells Fargo Bank. Chief Schmitt also stated that the SPD is currently down two officer's positions.

### **Questions**

Mr. Wise asked if they would begin hiring this month, and Chief Schmitt responded that they do have five applicants and planned on starting that process.

Ms. Roderick and her husband wanted to thank the Police and Fire Departments for everything that they do especially in the last couple weeks.

Mr. Wise asked if the Police Station had counseling available, and Chief Schmitt said that they have since day one.

Mr. Wise asked Chief Schmitt to let everyone involved know that they are greatly appreciated.

- **Fire Chief**-Chief Scott Elmer reported that the Fire Department had finally received the results of their Insurance Service Office (IFO) review of their Fire Suppression Rating Schedule. He stated that the ISO Rating had remained the same and the report identified areas of improvement. The rating is based on a scale of 1-10, and Sitka Fire Department is rated a 5, which he stated was a pretty good rating for a community the size of Sitka. A Class 1 represents exemplary fire protection, whereas Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria. He will be presenting items to the Police and Fire Commission in the future regarding the improvements. He would like to give the commission a chance to read the report and he will lead a Cost/Benefit discussion at the next meeting. Chief Elmer reported that the Fire Department responded to 11 Fire incidents and 64 EMS incidents during the month of March.

### **Questions**

Mr. Wise asked what the status was on the Ladder Truck.

Chief Elmer stated that they were hit the hardest on the rating due to not having a place for training, so if the Department can get a piece of property for a training area, it will become a priority, and the Ladder Truck would be the next priority. He also pointed out that he is working to get the Ladder Truck in with the next Capital Project Request.

Mr. Wise also asked how the Fire Department's plan was to get to a fire when we have bad snow weather.

Chief Elmer responded that the Department has a 4-wheel drive truck with a plow that would go in first to clear the access, and that they prepare ahead of time as much as possible. They chain-up one Fire Engine and Ambulance when it looks like it will snow.

He also said the new ambulance is almost ready and it will have 4-wheel drive as well. He also stated that they have a very good response from the Public Works Department to help with the road conditions.

## **H. OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Citizen request for additional handicap parking on Lincoln St.**

Mr. Wise reported that Mr. Burton, who works at the American Legion, has asked the Commission to designate an additional parking space on Lincoln Street as handicap parking. Currently there are designated handicap parking spaces on the other side of Lincoln Street from the American Legion. Mr. Burton, who is confined to a wheelchair, has been parking in one of three handicap parking spaces in the lot near Van Winkles and then goes through the alley near Mac's/Russell's to get to his job at the Legion. This alley is now blocked off for construction, and with all the snow this winter; it has made it difficult to get to work. According to Mr. Burton, it is an American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirement to have handicap spaces on both sides of the road. Mr. Wise did not know if that was true or not, but he did ask April Jensen, Deputy Clerk, about the requirement. She noted that the Assembly has never taken a position to conform to ADA requirements, but that they do make every effort to do so.

There are some challenges to Mr. Burton's request. A handicap space must be longer than a normal parking space so that the driver has access not only to the side of the vehicle, but also to the back, so it requires an additional 4 feet of clearance, which could take potentially 2 parking spaces. In Mr. Burton's request, he recommended one of two potential spots. One spot is in front of Fairweather Prints, and the other is on America Street. The owner of Fairweather Prints felt that it could be potentially dangerous because it could block the view of someone trying to turn out on to Lincoln Street from the side street. It was also noted that the owner's of The Sitka Bazaar are also adamantly opposed to someone parking in front of their store.

Mr. Wise said he went behind the Legion tonight and saw that there was a potential parking space between the container van and the back door of the Legion. Mr. Burton stated that it is too rocky behind the building and that snow was a problem. Mr. Wise felt that this space could possibly work as an alternative to an additional handicap parking space on Lincoln St.

Traffic Officer Judy Puckett attended the meeting since she is the authority on parking. She mentioned that the handicap parking space would require a 3-hour limit because it would be considered short-term parking. Ms. Roderick asked Officer Puckett if the City was in compliance with ADA requirements at this time. Officer Puckett responded that as far as she knew the City was in compliance. She expanded to say that there are handicap parking spots along Lincoln in front of City Hall, in front of the banks, in front of Bayview, and in the Crescent Harbor parking lot. She also noted that there are only 4 parking spots in between Fairweather Prints and Old Harbor Books due to the yellow zone restrictions. There is supposed to be 20 feet of yellow wherever there is a cross street. She said it would be a major safety issue to decrease the yellow zone any further where America Street and Barracks Street meet Lincoln. Another issue is that if you grant a spot to one person, you end up setting precedent for future requests. Also, even if there was a spot designated handicap, there was no guarantee that the space would be available when Mr. Burton showed up for work.

The Commission felt that there were other possible solutions to this issue besides designating an additional handicap parking space on Lincoln that would not create a safety hazard. The space behind the American Legion seemed to be the best solution. The space between the container van and the back door is large enough for a vehicle to park; it is paved and very close to the entrance to the Legion. As for Mr. Burton's concern regarding gravel and snow: maybe the Legion could make sure the space was swept and/or shoveled for when Mr. Burton arrived at work. If the Legion removed their container van, there would be enough room for two parking spaces, and they would be private parking spaces, so there would not be the issue of the space being taken before Mr. Burton arrived. The Commission felt that they needed to exhaust all other options before considering an additional handicap parking spot on Lincoln. The ultimate decision is in the hands of Chief Schmitt.

Ms. Knox asked if there was any literature stating that the City needs to keep handicap parking areas clear from debris? Officer Puckett said the Ordinance does state that and that the City does its best to accommodate.

The other parking options brought up included the two handicap parking spaces behind the Pioneer Home and the possibility of the Legion paying for Mr. Burton to park in the Sentinel's paid lot, but the Commission felt that the best alternative was to have Mr. Burton work out an arrangement with the Legion to park behind the building.

Ms. Roderick felt that a letter should be drafted to Mr. Burton explaining this to him.

**MOTION:** M/S **Roderick/Reeves** moved to write a letter to Mr. Burton explaining that the Police and Fire Commission will not agree to create a new handicap space on Lincoln due to the fact that there are other options available on the Legion property that do not create a safety hazard.

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

## 2. **Degroff St. Traffic Issues**

Ms. Roderick explained that Erica Knox was here as she mentioned earlier in the Additions/Deletions to Agenda item and asked the Commission if it would be okay to discuss the issue at this time.

Ms. Knox explained that she came to the meeting to request that the discussion on the traffic issues on Degroff St. be tabled another month so that the residents could be informed that the item would be on the agenda. This would give them the opportunity to attend the meeting and give public comment. She felt that the posting in the paper was not enough. She noted that for Land Use issues, a letter is sent out to all residents advising them of the issue and wondered if this could happen with regards to the Police and Fire Commission as well. She would like to table the issue so that she can collect information and inform the residents of the upcoming meeting.

Chief Schmitt felt that there was less traffic on Degroff since the barriers and the double traffic fine signs were put up. He said that he has had less calls since then.

Ms. Knox agreed that it was improved, but questions whether or not this will be maintained and would like the discussion to be postponed until the next meeting.

Mr. Wise stated that this issue was not scheduled to be on the Agenda at this time. He thought that at the last meeting the Commission decided that the issue would not be taken further unless citizens came forward with issues. According to the minutes the issue was handed over to Scott Brylinski, Public Works Operations Chief. He wanted to create a policy for the public to make traffic requests and present them to Mr. Brylinski for feasibility prior to presenting them to the Police and Fire Commission.

Ms. Knox would like to wait and see how the summer goes and then see if there could be a letter sent out to residents to see if there are any more public comments on the issue. Ms. Roderick said that the Commission would put a call in to Mr. Brylinski to confirm that he is working on the policy and she will get back with Ms. Knox.

**I. NEW BUSINESS**

**1. Discussion of entrance and exit at Crescent Harbor parking lot**

John Litten has requested that the Harbor Drive outbound driveway (across from the New Archangel fudge shop and the Bike Shop) be changed into a two way because people come thru the one way inbound and get stuck behind loading buses parked in front of Harrigan Centennial Hall; that it is a pedestrian hazard, and that the one way inbound driveway wouldn't be changed.

Ms. Roderick asked Don Kluting, manager of Harrigan Centennial Hall, via email if he saw any problem with this request. Mr. Kluting responded that this issue has been discussed several times at the Police and Fire Commission, and each time the decision has been to keep it a one way. He stated that the entrance and exits are narrow and two way traffic would be hazardous, especially with buses. He also said that traffic on Harbor drive heading for the bridge would stop the flow of traffic sooner while attempting to cross traffic to get into the new two way entrance. He said it was also discussed to reverse the flow of traffic, but the Lake and Lincoln intersection is too close. He stated that he understands Mr. Litten's concern, but disagrees with his solution.

The Commission felt that Mr. Litten should be encouraged to come to the next meeting to make his comments on the subject. It was agreed by the Commission to put this item on next month's agenda as Old Business and draft a letter to Mr. Litten requesting him to attend and provide comments on the issue.

**J. COMMISSION COMMENTS**

None

**K. SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND AGENDA ITEMS**

Next meeting date: May 7, 2008

**L. ADJOURNMENT**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:45PM

PREPARED BY: Ptarmica McConnell  
Contract Secretary