

**ANTIOCH CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
Lone Tree Golf Course Event Center
4800 Golf Course Road**

Special Meeting

Saturday, July 22, 2006

9:00 A.M.

9:00 A.M. – ROLL CALL

Mayor Freitas called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday, July 22, 2006 at the Lone Tree Golf Course Event Center, 4800 Golf Course Road.

ROLL CALL

Present: Councilmembers Conley, Davis, Kalinowski and Mayor Freitas
Absent: Councilmember Simonsen
Staff: City Manager Jakel
Chief of Police Hyde
Community Development Director Brandt
Economic Development Director Bjerke
City Attorney Nerland
Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator Skaggs
Community Development Block Grant Program Coordinator Kennedy
Minutes Clerk Lawson

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

STUDY FORUM

1. OPEN DISCUSSION ON QUALIFY OF LIFE ISSUES IN THE CITY OF ANTIOCH

Mayor Freitas welcomed the public and explained the facilitation process. He also introduced the City Council and City Staff.

Larry Bienati, Facilitator and Director of Consultants to Management, was introduced and provided his past experiences with the public sector and other local municipalities. Mr. Bienati explained the facilitation process he planned to follow and noted, per the agenda, he wanted to synthesize and prioritize the issues and comments made during the forum. He further spoke to the information gathered from the results of the online survey through CTMSurveys.com regarding the "Quality of Life Issues and Solutions" and provided a slide presentation highlighting:

- City Services
- Police Services
- City Improvement issues
 - Mr. Bienati noted Section 8 housing was not the only concern, rental properties and enforcement of the municipal code were also noted, along with the importance of accountability at all levels.

- Common Theme issues
- City Council and City Staff improvement issues
- Issues to be addressed to the Mayor and City Staff

Police Chief Hyde introduced himself and presented a slide presentation depicting crime statistics and police staffing issues within the City of Antioch. He also discussed the issues regarding police officer salaries and benefit issues, as well as minority diversity training programs.

Hans Ho, Chairperson for Crime Prevention Commissioner, expressed his appreciation to the City Council and the Police Department for their pro-active style in handling situations and issues.

Joe Brandt, City Engineer, spoke to the continued growth in housing development throughout the community and felt the City Council was very pro-active in controlling the housing growth.

Denise Skaggs, Neighborhood Code Enforcement, spoke to the various duties of the City's Code Enforcement Department and provided a slide presentation explaining Health and Safety issues, the manner in which the areas of the community were separated, and various statistics that spoke to specific areas needing to be addressed within the community.

PUBLIC COMMENTS REGARDING "QUALITY OF LIFE" ISSUES

Larry Bienati took direction from the audience regarding issues pertaining to:

- The blight of Empire Avenue and its surrounding area, as well as other areas throughout the community and suggested some type of system be set up to accommodate the disposal of large items.
- The City should look to other communities and states with similar problems with rentals in the community and ensure property is owner occupied for two years before it is rented out. Also it was suggested the implementation of an ordinance restricting the number of rentals allowed in new subdivisions.
- Concern regarding the rising crime rate in the Harbour Park neighborhood was expressed, along with concern over, what the residents felt, was the Police Department's lack of properly investigating specific situations. It was felt that vandalism should be a high priority.
- Suggestions were offered to schedule street sweeping and garbage collection on different days of the week, sidewalk repair be maintained on a consistent basis by the City, Section 8 housing be regulated, the Police Department maintain the City's Code Enforcement, storage of recreational vehicles in neighborhood subdivisions and garbage collection issues be handled by the City, with strict enforcement follow up.
- A concern was expressed questioning whether or not the police department was adequately staffed and requested adequate staffing requirements be followed within the City.
- It was suggested the Neighborhood Watch Program be a collaboration between the Police Department and City Council.

- Anti-bullying issues were discussed. A concern was expressed regarding children convicted of a crime, who, when returned to the school where the crime took place, harass those who children who reported the crime to the point of harassment. It was felt acts of retaliation increased the number of unreported incidents.
- A downtown resident requested speed bumps be installed throughout the community and especially on "E" Street between 2nd Street and 6th Street.
- Walter Ruehling, Antioch School Board Member, discussed bullying issues, including a system, currently under review, wherein students could anonymously text message school officials to report specific incidents. He also spoke to the positive aspects of the Neighborhood Watch Program, in conjunction with the police department and how the two entities could further the partnership in the future.
- A resident of Diamond Ridge spoke to the Neighborhood Watch Program and its effectiveness in her neighborhood. She also requested a free garbage drop off system be developed for the community.
- One citizen requested the elimination of the police department's "gang unit" stating the presence of a gang unit instilled fear amongst the community. Chief Hyde responded by describing "a few" of the benefits to the City as a result of the police department's pro-active investigation of gang activity.
- A citizen expressed concern regarding the high number of rentals within the community and suggested an Ordinance be implemented holding the property owner, not the renter, responsible for the condition of the property.
- One citizen expressed her concern regarding a home adjacent to hers that had recently burned down and requested the proper procedure to take to ensure the City's Code Enforcement would handle the situation.
- A citizen expressed concern to Rossi Avenue and the blight that existed throughout this neighborhood, as well as inadequate off-street parking in the neighborhood.
- One citizen spoke to the importance of the Neighborhood Watch Program and encouraged all neighborhoods to get involved with their neighborhood.
- Hans Ho, Chairperson for Crime Prevention Commissioner, announced August 1 would be National Night Out and spoke to the positive aspects of the Neighborhood Watch Program.
- A citizen felt homeowners, as well as renters themselves, were responsible for the care and maintenance of their homes. It was requested that surveillance cameras be installed in the Deer Valley Shopping Center.
- Another citizen requested enforcement be taken to ensure drug and alcohol enforcement at Belshaw Elementary after school hours.
- A citizen expressed dismay regarding tire and wheel theft in her neighborhood, to which Officer Cantando responded this was not just a city issue, county-wide and arrests had been made.
- One citizen felt the City should adopt a Zero Tolerance Policy for all types of crime and follow through with enforcement.
- Another citizen stated her neighborhood was 50% rentals, communication with adjacent neighbors was strained and expressed concern regarding the rise of crime in the community. She further requested the police department review and address the population of registered sex offenders currently residing near many of Antioch's elementary schools.

- A concern was expressed regarding school children on Sycamore Drive and L Street bullying residents trying to patronize nearby businesses. He also expressed concern regarding the downtown promenade where the homeless congregate.
- Concern was also expressed regarding the inadequate lighting in the shopping centers at Wal-Mart and Deer Valley Center and requested additional lighting be installed.
- A citizen requested an analysis of the violent crime be conducted, reasons for the rise in crime, as well as a review of options available to remedy the violence.
- A citizen commented that not all renters trash their property and noted, due to unreported crimes, she suggested programs be put into place for free counseling and parenting skills, as well as additional school counseling programs.
- A citizen requested the employment of police officers be reevaluated, as well as expectations from the police and City. Further, code enforcement be more proactive and stressed the importance of community involvement.
- A concern was expressed regarding the rise in crime along with the City's Vacation House Check Program, wherein she encouraged public to participation.
- A concern was expressed regarding the Belshaw Elementary School area, in terms of crime, adding, landlords of apartment complexes should be held responsible for all maintenance and rental issues.
- A citizen requested the current City Ordinances be reviewed and adjusted to meet the City's current needs and expressed concern regarding the amount of graffiti littering the City.

A break was taken at 10: 50 A.M. and reconvened at 11:00 A.M.

Mayor Freitas stated any citizen could participate in a "ride-a-long" with a police officer, and, if interested, to contact Officer Marchoke at the police department.

Community Development Director Brandt discussed the graffiti issues and encouraged the public to report any problems to the Code Enforcement Department.

PUBLIC COMMENTS CONTINUED REGARDING "QUALITY OF LIFE"

- A citizen with the United Citizens for Better Neighborhoods "UCBN" felt there should be an easy means for citizens to report crimes anonymously and discussed companies willing to sponsor resources for crime fighting measures.
- A citizen with the UCBN stated she fully supported the City and Police Department and felt enforcement at all levels should be a high priority. She requested the City look into a program called "Beat Health Program" implemented by the City of Vallejo Police Department and was geared toward quality of life improvements.
- A citizen suggested the police department's crime analysis unit be expanded and further suggested additional police officers be added to specific beat areas.
- A concern was expressed regarding fireworks being set off within the City and suggested some type of enforcement be placed at the Sacramento/Alameda County lines a week before July 4. She further stated she expected all City of Antioch employees to set excellent examples to uphold the laws of the City.

- Tom Fuhrmann, President of the Antioch Police Officers Association, discussed the police department's retention issues, inadequate police officer staffing and stated he felt additional monies were needed in order for the City's police services to reach the point where they would be able to serve and protect the City appropriately.
- Concern regarding school children loitering in the area of the Deer Valley Shopping Center was expressed by a citizen who stated she had witnessed the students gambling and fighting, adding she felt the school district should assume more responsibility on this issue.
- A concern was expressed that loitering leads to criminal activity.

Mayor Freitas stated he was aware of the loitering issues and felt the property and business owners should become more involved, as well as the citizens, to inform the managers of the businesses and the police department. He further noted some businesses had been informed by their corporate office to direct their employees to not confront or interfere with shoplifting activity or other criminal activity. He further noted the City was currently working with the Antioch Unified School District on these issues.

- A citizen felt all renters should take responsibility and pride in their home and expressed her appreciation to the City's Code Enforcement Department for ensuring a neighbor's yard be cleaned up.
- A citizen expressed her appreciation to the Code Enforcement Department for their recent help in resolving an issue involving a basketball pole placed near her home and resulted in an influx of children congregating near her home.
- A citizen felt additional funding was needed to improve public safety.
- Walter Ruehling, Antioch School Board, stated that due to recent problems, the bus shop located at Knollpark would be moved in the near future and Regal Cinemas planned handle the crime issues by changing their rules of conduct. He further expressed concern regarding the heavy work load on the teachers of Antioch. He stated in the future he would like to address a Community Teen Center, graffiti and dress code issues.
- A citizen stated additional monies should be put into police services and suggested the cost of code violation fines be increased.
- A citizen suggested the skateboard park be supervised.
- A citizen suggested the schools implement a dress code.
- A citizen spoke to the need of anti-bullying programs and felt counselors in the schools could bring down the crime rate.
- A concern regarding truancy within the community was expressed.
- A concern was expressed regarding individuals who do not report crime for fear of retaliation.
- In responding to school registration issues, Walter Ruehling, Antioch School Board Member, explained the school district was doing everything possible to research this issue and felt the school district was conducting the enrollment system in a rigorous manner. He also noted a tip line was on the school district's website to anonymously report an individual.

Mayor Freitas expressed his appreciation to the public and City Staff for their involvement and participation in this forum and noting he looked forward to additional forums in the future, adding a Youth Activities forum would be discussed at a later date.

COMMENTS BY THE CITY COUNCIL

Councilmember Davis stated he was currently involved with the Youth Council and wanted to see the following new programs integrated with Youth:

- “Go Home First Program” whereby all students would go home to finish homework and check in. This program would be integrated with the Youth Council and the Antioch schools.
- “Family Night” whereby all students spend at least one night a week with their families.
- A new program entitled “Fight Crime” involving after school activities.

Councilmember Davis wanted to assure the public crime was not being downplayed within the community and felt the City should be more involved. He acknowledged the catalyst of problems within the Deer Valley Plaza and reported he had contacted Deer Valley Plaza’s property management, whereby they assured him extra security would become more prevalent within the next two weeks. They also stated cameras would be installed starting with the Regal Cinemas area, and continue down to Albertson’s. He encouraged the public to directly contact the manager of each store located within the plaza and let them know, as an Antioch resident, you would not be patronizing their business until crime was under control. Councilmember Davis stated he felt this would send a strong message to each store’s manager. He further expressed his appreciation to the public for attending.

Councilmember Kalinowski discussed past crime issues, stating specific objectives needed to be met by the City Council, including Council’s need to return phone calls back to the public, adding this issue must be formalized. In regards to the Deer Valley Plaza, he was satisfied cameras would be installed and felt they should be installed in other areas of the community as well. In terms of responsibility, he felt the “Character Counts Program” would be a benefit to the City and wanted this program to move forward. Councilmember Kalinowski assured the public the police department was adequately funded, but additional revenue was needed. Furthermore, Council dialogue was needed, along with community input. He suggested some type of steering committee be identified with direction from the City Council as to a specific plan.

Councilmember Conley stated his appreciation to the public for attending this forum. He stated he had spoken to the County Sheriff’s Department wherein they would help the City’s Police Department, noting the new Police Chief would be exploring similar types of programs. Councilmember Conley stated he would not patronize Albertsons. He further stated he felt Albertson’s refusal to prosecute shoplifters was the same as condoning criminal activity. He further looked forward to future forums with the public and felt this would increase the quality of life in Antioch.

Councilmember Kalinowski stated, for the record, he fully supported Councilmember Conley’s work with the County Sheriff’s Department.

Mayor Freitas noted the website survey would remain open and encouraged the public to provide additional input. He further stated the City Council was very serious regarding the issues facing the community and felt it all came down to the ability of local

government to pay for specific services. He felt the logical next step would be to begin a prioritization process from the information gathered through these meetings and other avenues to address these issues. Mayor Freitas stated he had proposed a program called "Project Clean Sweep" involving various departments within City Hall and the public to determine what the standards should be for the City. Following the implementation of this program, he felt citations should be given with follow-up. He further spoke to transportation funding. He stated his appreciation to City Staff and the public for their attendance today and noted the next forum would be held after Labor Day. The date would be announced and priorities reviewed and discussed at the next meeting, through public input.

Councilmember Kalinowski announced the City Council would bring back, at the next forum, a plan for the issues discussed today.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Freitas adjourned the City Council meeting at 12:22 P.M. to the next regularly scheduled meeting of July 25, 2006.

Respectfully Submitted,

Debra Lawson
Minutes Clerk