



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
August 28, 2021

Members Present: Mayor Rohan Hepkins, Councilor Liana Roadcloud, Finance Director Nafis Nichols, Police Lieutenant Sean Burns, Code Enforcement Director/Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire Marshal Rufus Stokes, Public Works Director Jeffery Wilkinson, Antoinette Truehart

Absent: Council President Latoya Monroe, Councilor Dolores McCabe, Fire Chief Michael Dienno, Tax Collector Julianne James, Solicitor Charles M. Gibbs, and Denise Stinson

Other Attendees: Tamika Pointer, Donna Samuel, and Cynthia Nesmith

The Public Safety Committee Meeting was held via Zoom and started at 9:34 am.

Mayor Rohan Hepkins opened the meeting with a prayer.

Mayor's Rohan Hepkins: Revisited old business and discussed new business - Fernwood/ Yeadon fencing updated, increasing dog curbing issues, school re-opening, proposed Marijuana Dispensary, and Public Safety issues.

The dilapidated Fernwood/Yeadon fencing has been an ongoing effort. The Mayor, Public Works Director Jeff Wilkinson and a representative from SEPTA have been in constant contact to fix the situation because it is a safety hazard. The repairs have already begun, and SEPTA will be assisting by adding a guardrail once the fencing is fixed.

There has been an increase in dog curbing issues. Public Works and the Code Department has been made aware of the situation and are monitoring the area.

The William Penn School District will be re-opening after Labor Day. Schools will be in-person with social distancing and a mask requirement, but it is still unknown what the requirements of the Library will be. Mayor Hepkins discussed the need of a police presence during the closing of schools and wants to be prepared going into the new school year.

There is a proposed Marijuana Dispensary that will be purchasing the old Citizens Bank. There will be a special Town Hall Meeting during Thursday, September 3rd's Mayor's Forum. He encouraged residents to come to share information, be transparent to the residents as to what is going on, what it means for us and what we can and can't do. Mayor Hepkins would not like it to be there, but we are limited to what we can do due to law and code. The owners have been invited to answer any resident questions/concerns but as of now Mr. Stokes does not have an answer as to whether they will be present. However, he will retry again on Monday, August 30th.

The issue of street lighting was discussed as resident Tamika Pointer stated that some blocks 'lighting is insufficient. Mayor Hepkins asked about a County budget/plan to retrofit and update the lighting in the municipalities in Delaware County. The Mayor added that he is not satisfied with the lighting if it is complete as some areas seem poorly lit or insufficient in some areas.

Management: Finance Director Nafis Nichols stated that the Borough Engineer is currently working on a plan to address lighting issues for the entire Borough. The interim fix is tree trimming that is currently

taking place as the older trees in Yeadon are blocking the streetlights. Mr. Nichols answered the Mayor's question about a lighting initiative to update the lighting in Delaware County. Mr. Nichols stated that the lighting had been updated to LED and has been complete as of 2019.

Police Department - Police Lieutenant Sean Burns stated that he does not anticipate any problems this upcoming school year. The Police Department has quelled the fights after school that has happened in the past couple of years. The Borough lucked out with Virtual school last year, but steps are being taken and put into place to ensure that everyone gets home safe such as the placement of Crossing Guards and the Police Officers are aware of the school closing times and will be in the areas.

Lieutenant Burns addressed the home evasion issue(s). He explained that there are teens and adults that sometime walk around and try door handles. Chief Paparo has an initiative named *Mission Lock It Up* to remind residents to lock their doors and cars at night. Vehicle break-ins have drastically decreased due to police patrol. Our main issues are traffic and parking, but both are issues that the PD is actively working on.

Lieutenant Burns stated that the numbers in the front and in the back of the house are key in the Police Department responding. He said that porch lights are also great to illuminate so that they can easily access the surroundings. He also stated that calling 9-1-1 is the best way to get an officer quickly as calling the station telephone number delays the response time as officers are not sitting in the station.

Officers are at the Wellness Center for a Back-to-School drive and three officers will be at Kerr Field for crowd control during tonight's Movie Night sponsored by the Yeadon Fire Company.

Fire Department – No Report Given

Public Works Department – Mr. Wilkinson stated that the Mayor, himself, and a representative from SEPTA have been in constant contact to fix the situation because it is a safety hazard. The fence has been erected on the 400 block of Cypress and the hillside has been cleaned and the old fencing deemed unnecessary has been removed on the 400 block of Holly. SEPTA will be assisting by adding a guardrail once the fencing is fixed. The timeline on completion is currently unavailable.

There has been an increase in dog curbing issues due to an increase of dog ownership in the Borough. Public Works and the Code Department are aware of the situation and are actively handling it by opening investigations on complaints, placing additional signage on existing poles and erecting additional poles for signs as needed on blocks and blanketing affected blocks with general code violation letters to residents. Mr. Wilkinson stated that the first step is to contact the Code Department. After which an investigation will be started if the complainant has actual proof of the violator such as pictures and/or video at which time they will be cited for the violation. If no actual culprit can be identified, and the affected block(s) will be blanketed with general code violation letters to those residents which will free up time for the code officers/Public Works Department to do other things

Mr. Wilkinson stated that the lighting is different in areas as PECO has higher lighting in high traffic areas and lower wattage fixtures on residential blocks. After a conversation with Mr. Nichols, he has purchased higher wattage fixtures and Public Works is actively swapping out the lower wattage ones.

He also added that he will have three employees at Kerr Field for crowd control during tonight's Movie Night sponsored by the Yeadon Fire Company. They also have two gigantic lights that were borrowed to further illuminate the field.

Code Department – Code Enforcement Director/Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire Marshal Rufus Stokes stated that there is push back from residents about code enforcement as they feel it is an overstepping of boundaries on their properties.

Emergency Management- No report given

Comments – Councilor Liana Roadcloud asked if further investigation was looked into if the fencing is actually our responsibility and not just taking the “word” of SEPTA. She also questioned if the residents on adjacent properties were made aware of what was happening, informing them of the extent of our (the Borough’s) responsibility and advising them on providing their own fencing. She was assured by Mr. Wilkinson that the engineer from SEPTA was present with blueprints to show what their actual fencing would look like as well as it being the Borough’s responsibility. She was also advised by Mr. Wilkinson that he would go speak with them to inform them that they were welcome to put up their own fencing as well as an extra safety measure as long as their fencing was code compliant with the Borough.

Councilor Liana Roadcloud also questioned the process behind the dog curbing investigations and signage, and the cost effectiveness of the process. Councilor Roadcloud stated that she will further discuss this issue offline at a later time at which time the Mayor and Mr. Wilkinson agreed. Tamika Pointer asked if there were block captains that could be designated to pitch in and distribute the information and inform their neighbors of the possible violation. The Mayor stated that there used to be Block Captains in the past and is actively trying to resurrect that program, and at the current time there are residents that have independently taken charge as unofficial Block Captains in certain neighborhoods. Code Enforcement Director/Emergency Management Coordinator/Fire Marshal Rufus Stokes added that Town Watch set up the Block Captains when they were in effect. However, at this time it is non-existent as the previous members have passed on. Yeadon Democratic Committee Chair Antoinette Truehart also added that the YDC serves as an information portal to get as much information out to the community through the committee members and are willing to help to get this information out.

Councilor Roadcloud questioned the difference between the proposed Starbucks and the Marijuana Dispensary at the old Citizens Bank location in reference to why Starbucks was pushed to look at the old CVS location due to the increase of traffic and the effect of the traffic flow on Church Lane but not the Dispensary. Mayor Hepkins stated that it’s mostly due to limitations of law and zoning. The proposed reasoning is the projection that there would be no more traffic than what it was when it was a bank where people would come in, park their cars, go in the facility and leave, much like the bank operated, whereas a Starbucks would create more traffic due to having a drive-through and a constant flow of patrons. Councilor Roadcloud also asked about the unforeseen effects of the Municipal parking lot in proximity to the bank’s parking lot as well as her concerns about armed security in the area. Democratic Committee Chair Antoinette Truehart also expressed her concerns about armed security being at that location and added that an already established facility on Baltimore Pike generates a tremendous traffic on a Friday evening and has a concern. It will be further discussed at the Mayor’s Forum on Thursday, September 2nd. Mrs. Cynthia Nesmith also expressed her concern about the traffic and new people coming into the community and casing out the area.

Tamika Pointer asked about additional streetlights and police patrols due to a home invasion, and adding a stop sign at the corner of Whitby Avenue and W. Cobbs Creek Parkway. She also volunteered to help. Mayor Hepkins assured Ms. Pointer that the police department is aware of the people casing the area and that the Yeadon Police Department answers calls efficiently. He also discussed the camera system that he is trying to get installed to help deter crime and increase Public Safety. Councilor Roadcloud stated that the residents need to be more proactive because calling the police is a reactive issue. She recommended motion sensors, turning on front patio lights, putting the address in the back of the house, securing your own home, and recommending security systems in the newsletter, on Next Door, etc.

Councilor Roadcloud stated that following simple ordinances like bushes being maintained adds to the Public Safety issue when the police have to chase someone. These things enable suspects to hide.

Meeting ended at 10:55 a.m.

Antoinette Truehart ended the meeting with a prayer.

Respectfully submitted by Quiana Braxton