

# PCRG Safe Neighborhoods Network Meeting Minutes

Saturday, January 14, 2012

9:00 – 11:00 am

PCRG Conference Room

**In Attendance:** Terry Doloughty, Polish Hill Civic Association; Liz Style, Mayor's Office; Harry Johnson, Office of Councilman Lavelle; Michael Flaherty, Fineview Citizens Council; Melissa Gallagher, Fineview Citizens Council; Darla D'Anna, Mount Washington Community Development Corporation; Lauren Byrne, Lawrenceville United; Jay Gilmer, PIRC; Pat Buck, Fineview Citizens Council; Martha Ann Jones, Operation Better Block

Discussed this Meeting:

- Updates from Mayor's Office;
- How to make Citywide Public Safety Meetings more effective;
- Neighborhood Issues;
- SNN in 2012

## **Updates from the Mayor's Office – Liz Style**

- Weed and Seed has ended, but MO is working on new public safety initiatives
- MO has just undergone a strategic planning process, this will guide their efforts this year
- Will continue to work w/ PCRG and CTAC, and work towards another SAFE Pittsburgh event
- MO will be putting together a block watch manual called "Block Watch in a Box" – a guide for forming new block watches and strengthening current block watches
  - Liz provided a handout with an outline of the proposed subject areas to address with the "Block Watch in a Box" and asked the group for feedback/suggestions

## **Discussion: How to make Citywide Public Safety Council meetings more effective?**

Discussion of what is and is not working in the Citywide Public Safety Meetings. How should these differ from the Zone Public Safety Councils? What is impactful? What is repetitive? How to keep these from simply being a report-out? How to keep individuals from monopolizing the meetings?

*Note: This conversation devolved into a wide range of topics, which all touched on effective communication and collaboration. Regardless of whether such discussions were directly relevant to the question of how to make Citywide Public Safety meetings more effective, those conversations are captured in this section.*

- Pat asked how Mayor's Office decides what will be covered in the Citywide Public Safety Meetings; the last meeting in Beechview covered content that wasn't relevant to Fineview.

- Liz clarified **that meeting topics are selected by Police or Safety Council or both in collaboration**. Currently, the Citywide meetings should three times a year, rotating police zones each time. No one within the administration (MO or Pittsburgh Police) sets the dates and topics in advance. The hope is to move toward a system that sets out meeting dates, times, locations, and topics at the beginning of each year. In Zone 6 (Beechview), there is no public safety council so content decisions for the last Citywide were made by Police based on concerns/reports they had heard.
  - Two zones – Zone 6 and Zone 4 (Squirrel Hill, Greenfield, Hazelwood) do not have active public safety councils.
- Terry – seems at times that Block Watches and Community Groups are working in silos, not collaborating or sharing info on community issues. Collaboration between those two groups may help set more productive topics for community-wide meetings. Block Watches aren't separate entities.
- Terry - Citywide events are too large and emotional issues can take over. It's more effective to hold neighborhood-scale meetings to address larger issues. The Council to Go meetings that Councilman Dowd holds in neighborhoods across District 7 and this has been very effective in Polish Hill. Dowd comes to the office to take questions and hear resident concerns. This also serves as an outreach tool for Polish Hill Civic Association.
  - Harry mentioned that Councilman Lavelle was beginning to host his own Council to Go meetings throughout District 6 as well.
  - Group agreed there was a need for back-end communication, as a perceived lack of information/feedback from the Police can trigger these emotional issues at Citywide events. It was noted that residents should ask for a report number from any police or 311 report so that they can use this number to track progress and ask for updates.
  - Also issues with expectations of meetings. Tighter structure would keep things on topic and let attendees know what will/won't be discussed.
- A set schedule for meeting time, places, and topics would help a great deal.
  - Citywide topics should focus on city as a whole - not individual neighborhoods. Commander's presence to address issues at Zone Meetings could help keep issues away from Citywide.
- Need for educational components for residents. Residents need to know how large their zone is; this can better improve expectations of call and response. Meetings as well need to move from reactive to proactive. The typical pattern is Event → Reaction → Learning → Feedback.
- Residents want direct contact, both with police and with other residents. Public Safety meetings should facilitate this.
- In summary of this conversation: There is a need for pre-scheduling and uniform marketing of meetings. Meetings should be structured so that info covered is important and pertinent to all city residents. While meetings should be largely educational, leave time at end to discuss personal concerns with commanders. Keep feedback on specific past incidents to zone meetings, but can citywide events can still offer feedback on larger issues. Emily asked for any further feedback/suggestions on Citywide & Zone Meetings to be directed to Liz via email or after the meeting.

## **Roundtable Discussion: What challenges/successes are you seeing in your neighborhood?**

### ***Speeding and Thru-Traffic***

- Polish Hill largely facing quality of life issues. Specifically speeding from those cutting through Polish Hill. Increased speeding, traffic, and litter detract from “residential” nature of community. Terry has been requesting speed bumps to slow traffic down. Lawrenceville has experienced the same issue; Lauren was told that speed bumps can inhibit snow plows and emergency vehicles.

### ***Root Problems of Crime and Violence***

- Fineview is working to address crime in Public Housing units in Allegheny Dwellings. Further work/collaboration is needed as residents see block watches as racially motivated. There is a lack of coordination of services among social service providers and community groups. Residents are afraid of reporting crime to Police due to reprisal. This is not just a problem in Fineview, as Northview Heights and East Allegheny are facing similar issues. There is private security on site, but majority of crime isn’t being committed by residents of Allegheny Dwellings.

## **Discussion: What is in store for Safe Neighborhoods Network in 2012?**

- The group made suggestions for possible topics to cover in 2012. Public Housing, domestic violence, sex crimes, and Megan’s Law were all suggested. Emily suggested that public housing may be too large of a topic to cover solely with SNN, but there’s a possibility for PCRG to address the impacts of public housing on communities and residents.
- Emily will be setting up a schedule for topics and speakers and asked the group for input/ideas moving forward.
- SNN will be looking at doing another SAFE Pittsburgh Event, in collaboration with CTAC and the Mayor’s Office
  - There will be an initial steering committee for the next SAFE Pittsburgh, which will then form a larger committee to plan the event. If there is any interest in being a part of either group, please contact Emily.
- Jay Gilmer from PIRC explained the Citizens Police Academy to the group. Applications are due this month, but these classes provide a good chance to hear what the Police are doing FROM the Police. There is a maximum of 30 people per session, but each session stands alone so individuals can miss sessions here and there and won’t be slowed down. The Citizens Police Academy runs for 15 weeks, with one 3 hour class every Wednesday night. Application/Flyer is online.
  - Liz briefly mentioned the Moms and Cops Program which provides one daylong session on family violence.

**Next Meeting: Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at 9:00 am at PCRG**