



**SAFETY COMMITTEE
MONDAY JULY 20, 2015**

COMMITTEE MEETING:

**PLACE: COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7232 E. MAIN ST, REYNOLDBURG, OH 43068**

1. Call to Order

PRESENT: Kelly, McGrady III, Clemens, Cotner, Long, Skinner, Joseph
ABSENT:

2. Approval of Agenda

Addition of item 4. b. City Park Security
Approved by voice vote.

3. Approval of Minutes

- a. Safety Committee – Committee Meeting – July 6, 2015
Minutes stand approved.

4. Discussion

- a. ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF REYNOLDSBURG, OHIO: SECTION 160.02 “AUTHORIZED POSITIONS, PERSONNEL, CLASSIFICATION AND PAY GRADE” Subsection (F) “Police Department”; of CHAPTER 160 EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. (First Reading 7/13/2015 ~ Requests Passage as Emergency at Second Reading.)

RESULT:	REFERRED TO COUNCIL [UNANIMOUS]	Next: 7/27/2015 7:30 PM
MOVER:	Chris Long	
SECONDER:	Leslie Kelly, Ward II	
AYES:	Kelly, McGrady III, Clemens, Cotner, Long, Skinner	

b. City Park Security

Committee Chairman Long: Item 4. b., City Park Security, added by Mr. Barrett.

Councilman Barrett: It came to my attention a while ago, that students used JFK park to enjoy illegal drugs and for other activities. I thought it was really odd and just a rumor until I was running through there a couple of weeks ago, and in broad daylight, there were kids vandalizing the gazebo with spray paint. I reported it and learned it had already been called

in. I think we could find a way to monitor the area, and I have spoken with the Parks and Recreation Department regarding this.

Chief O'Neill: I became aware on Friday that this was going to be an agenda item. I had Sergeant Gregory, who handles our records, do some checking for statistics. I had him pull all of the activity in the parks from January 1st, 2014 to the present, to get an idea of the crime in that area, for that time frame. Obviously there is more activity in the summer opposed to the winter, due to the number of people, both those doing wrong, and those who will report what they see. What I saw was that by far, the most reported incident in our parks, is suspicious activity. This tells me, that at least the people who are at the parks to enjoy them, are more than willing to call us and have us check it out. These suspicious activities have a wide range. For instance, at least one of the suspicious activities was kids throwing snowballs at other people in the park. That may have been called in as suspicious, or it may have been called in as a juvenile complaint. There is a little bit of overlap. We had eighty-eight occurrences of suspicious activity over the last eighteen months. We had twenty-nine disturbances, ranging from juveniles using rough language, to what was reported as shots fired in the park, which were most likely fireworks. We did not see or make any arrests on any violent felonies in the park over the last eighteen months. We did have some fights, and one incidence of domestic violence. But, as far as what I would consider a more significant violent crime, we did not have any of those. There were no robberies, rapes, or any crimes like those. There were ten incidences of drug activities. Again, some of the eighty-eight suspicious activities were called in, and did result in some marijuana being seized, but we saw very little upper level drug activity. There was no cocaine, no heroine, or any drugs like that. Ten incidences of property damage, two thefts, seven reports of recovered property, and twenty-seven miscellaneous, which include anything from solicitors, to parking, to squad runs, to dog alerts. We have not seen, what I would consider an upswing, other than the normal seasonal increase in activity.

Ms. Bauman: The graffiti has actually slowed down since the June 26th incident. So I am hoping that the culprits you picked out, the ones who have been doing it, were the ones that we did catch. We have seen a decrease. We don't call in everything to the police department. We just go ahead and clean it up. We have the information to report, but it is just as easy for us to get it cleaned up. This year we have probably seen ten to twelve incidences of vandalism, that we cleaned up, but did not report. And it was mainly in the gazebo.

Councilwoman Kelly: Donna, are there certain areas where we see more graffiti?

Ms. Bauman: The gazebo is the biggest.

Councilwoman Kelly: Would it be possible to have cameras placed on the gazebo?

Ms. Bauman: I have been told there is a camera that faces the skate park. I am unsure as to whether you can see the gazebo with it.

Councilwoman Kelly: Could we get additional cameras that are on the gazebo. As someone who has worked with juveniles for most of my adult life, the best way to curb bad behavior, and learn from it, is to clean up what they have messed up, and to work with their families.

Ms. Bauman: That's exactly what is happening with the 18 yr old who was caught. He is painting the gazebo even though he claims he only painted the floor. But I have had him painting the entire gazebo and tables, for the last four days.

Councilwoman Kelly: That's fantastic, that is how you change that behavior. I am so glad to hear that.

Ms. Bauman: I did inform him, to inform his friends, that there is a camera.

Councilwoman Kelly: I think the more we get cameras, and those types of things, the more we are able to hold those kids accountable. That is how you create change. Great job.

Chairman Long: I appreciate you coming before us as well. And, I understand that kids will be kids as far as snowballs and foul language, but I am concerned about the number of vandalism incidences where employees are spending time painting and erasing. I am sure the cost in number of hours that have been attributed from our Park and Re Department personnel, could probably easily pay for a camera.

Chief O'Neill: One of the things that came up in our discussions over the last couple of days, is the likelihood of us using our School Resource Officers, and our DARE Officer, and assigning them a detail during the summer break that puts them in the parks. The problem is, even if we were to catch some of the kids on camera, the Parks and Rec people may not know who they are looking at, or who has been issued a Trespass Warning. By taking the Officers who recognize those kids and deal with them throughout the school year, it gives us one more tool we can use.

Councilwoman Kelly: Chief, I am so glad to hear about that. I think that what makes a School Resource Officer so successful, is the relationship that they build. So having somebody that can work with those kids might help them figure out why they are making choices that they are making, while holding them accountable.

Councilman Barrett: My thinking is, it is recognized that the kids use terrible language, and I get that kids are kids, but there are rumors of weed and that it is a place for young kids to get heroine. I have heard that kids go into the woods and "learn about life". Eighty-eight suspicious activities that warranted getting phoned in, and the fact that they are placing graffiti in broad daylight, and where I would suspect would be the safest and cleanest in town, is in back of your shop. I don't know what the answer is, although I have some ideas. I like the idea of videotaping. If you are out there, you do know whether it is on or off. I understand you don't want to dedicate an officer to the park. However, could they drive through? There are a lot of things to think about. One thing I don't like, and I mentioned it a couple of directors ago, underneath the bridge should be lit. We do that during the Tomato Festival. People are still using that park in the Fall and under that bridge is intimidating. I

can't imagine it would cost a lot to place a couple of safety and security lights there. Perhaps there is a way to increase that presence.

Chief O'Neill: We are at a little bit of a pinch as far as manpower. We have two people we are getting ready to hire and get on the road within the next couple of weeks. We have at least one person out, for up to a year, on injury leave. And another out, that will never return. It is a matter of clearing him from the books. We are stretched thin on normal patrol. I have said this, I would love to have more people and put them to work in places like the park. It is a question of where we can take them from at this point.

Councilman Barrett: That is frustrating. I am hearing the "I don't have any money song" again. And, I get it because I have been fighting that battle since I got up here. But, I can't believe there is not another in-between. Buy a camera with a nine volt battery, and have it flash a red light to make them think it is on. There has got to be something in-between from where we currently are.

Chief O'Neill: Maybe you are misunderstanding me. I didn't say we couldn't do anything. I said, we are stretched a little thin. We can do what we can do. But, to revamp our manpower and place someone in the park full time, is not functional.

Councilman Barrett: I don't think that was ever implied, and if I implied it, that would be incorrect. Again, my thinking is, here is where we are at, and here is where it wouldn't be the embarrassment and safety issue that it is now. So, how do we bridge that. I am looking to you guys for ideas.

Mayor McCloud: Thank you Chairman Long. I will meet with the Chief and Donna again. We have already met on this issue. We will meet and put together some concrete plans that meet both our human and financial resources. There is something in-between what we have, and a full-time park officer. With that said, I will follow up with City Council regarding implementation.

Chairman Long: I think the whole idea was to acknowledge to the public, which is where a lot of the complaints are derived, that we are aware of the situation. The opportunity for the Chief to present was to show that it is not dangerous at this time. Again, we are aware. There are costs associated. And, the appropriate steps now are for the Mayor to sit down, discuss, and put together possible solutions. Mr. Barrett, if you would like to have additional conversations with Donna, the Chief, and the Mayor, I think that would be the best direction to take. Ms. Kelly.

Chairwoman Kelly: I would also like to mention, that while we are talking about the need to be a little bit tighter with our safety. It sounds like you have a proactive plan that you are already thinking about, with your School Resource Officers, and what is being done with Community Services. But, I also want to reiterate that there are a lot of great things also going on in the parks. I don't want to leave with the idea that our parks are bad places. They are not. They are wonderful places. I want to make sure we are not losing that message, and

that we are just trying to tighten it up so that it continues to be a really good place for families and fun activities.

Chairman Long: Absolutely. Any further comments from members of the committee? Councilman McGrady.

Councilman McGrady: Yes, I would just like to add that when the parties sit down and start doing the feasibility study regarding manpower and security, please consider including Pine Corey park as well. I walked down there yesterday and the whole entrance was washed out, so that is a safety issue as well.

Chairman Long: Any other comments from members of the committee? Hearing none, this item will be carried on for further discussion by the involved parties.