

MINUTES
Annie Glidden North Task Force
Neighborhood Safety and Security Subcommittee Meeting
March 8, 2018

The Annie Glidden North (AGN) Safety and Security Subcommittee held a meeting on March 8, 2018 in the City Council Chambers at City Hall. The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

A. Roll Call

The following committee members were present: Michelle Bringas, Will Heinisch, Christie Krupp, Mohammad Labadi, and Mike Pittsley. Staff present included Management Analyst Emily Tipps, Management Analyst Ray Munch, Commander Craig Woodruff, and Diana Robinson, Center for Governmental Studies. AGN Task Force member Chad Glover was present as an observer.

B. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved following a motion by Heinisch and a second by Krupp.

C. Approval of Minutes- February 15, 2018

Minutes from the February 5th, 2018, meeting were amended to replace “on campus” with “off campus” in the following statement: “NIU needs to provide procedures that will allow student parties to be held on campus but have basic safety requirements in place such as monitors and set times.” Move to approve the minutes as amended by Heinisch. Seconded by Krupp. Motion approved.

D. Items of Discussion/Action

1. Desired outcomes related to safety and security in the Annie Glidden North neighborhood.

Pittsley opened the meeting by asking DeKalb Police Commander Woodruff to weigh in on any safety and security initiatives he thought this committee should consider. Woodruff said that he reviewed the notes from the last meeting and thought that much of what was suggested is in place. They are focusing on problem-oriented patrolling and so are spending their time more strategically. The problem is that everything is transient. Problem individuals move around and the police have to figure out where they’ve relocated to.

Woodruff described the Police Department's Police to Citizen civilian portal. This allows citizens to report crimes and visualize on a map where the crimes are. They are currently working with the web developer to make the website compliant with the American with Disabilities Act so that it may be accessible to everyone, including people with visual or hearing impairments. They hope to have it out this spring. Because it's a website, users don't have to sign up for it. He also mentioned the possibility of "grading" apartment complexes by compiling crime statistics and developing a rating system to determine who's doing the best job for their tenants. This information then becomes useful to prospective tenants.

Munch shared that prior to coming to DeKalb he was a police officer and started a crime-free housing program in Carol Stream. That program required property owners to go through training plus an inspection and participate in other potentially cumbersome requirements to address security. Some of those requirements could entail significant expense. His experience was that many property owners did the training but did not have the money or initiative to complete the certification.

2. Identify specific projects to achieve desired outcomes and 3. Identify potential partners/stakeholders for projects.

Labadi had previously reported that there was an ordinance requiring property owners to have cameras. Krupp said that she looked it up and it was limited in scope and did not include residential property owners. Munch said that Carol Stream started with baby steps and made the process voluntary. Woodruff said he thought that DeKalb would want to do that and they are particularly interested in working with the fraternities. Property owners of the fraternities cooperated with the City's requirement that they put in cameras, so they now have both cameras and good lighting. Krupp asked whether that language could be used to make that requirement citywide. Woodruff said that Legal would have to be consulted.

Munch said that the cost might be reasonable for small units, but for larger ones, it could potentially mean hundreds of thousands of dollars of improvements. In Carol Stream, investors spent about \$1.5 million for an 800-unit apartment. The challenge is to not impose an unreasonable mandate and drive investors out of the city. Heinisch asked why DeKalb should focus on buildings that are not a problem. The issue is the behavior of the property owner, not the size of the building.

Krupp said that she contacted DeKalb City Attorney Dean Frieders and he said such an ordinance never was proposed. She suggested that it be taken up with their aldermen. Pittsley said that it's all about budgets and money, and some funding had to be made available.

Krupp reported that she had been talking with the DeKalb County Community Foundation about funding to install moveable cameras. People she's spoken with about this have been responsive about donating to such a fund. She hasn't created such a fund yet with the Foundation but it's

easy to do. A gatekeeper for the fund needs to be designated who would advise on how funds are disbursed. A well-thought-out roll-out would also need to be developed. Krupp asked if anyone was opposed to the Foundation fund idea, and no one was.

Heinisch suggested that this camera fund could be added under item 3 of the template provided by Camiros which addressed “Improved environmental design through additional cameras, additional lighting, and improved property maintenance.” A related idea was to sell the house that the City purchased for occupancy by a police officer and use the proceeds to purchase cameras in the Annie Glidden North area.

Pittsley said that another idea is to impose a tax on property owners to fund cameras or establish a Special Service Area. Woodruff said that high-speed internet is being installed in the AGN area that will make connectivity faster and easier. Munch said that broadband improvements will be introduced at next week’s City Council meeting. Pittsley said that live video feeds to the Police Department PD would be helpful. Woodruff agreed, saying that when they request access to videos, they often find it’s not operating correctly.

Pittsley said that he hoped the City designates someone responsible for the neighborhoods whose responsibilities would include monitoring lighting and coordinating the police, code enforcement, and environmental design problems. Heinisch said that could be part of what a network of neighborhood associations could be created to do. Rockford does this with someone in City government coordinating this network and serving as a liaison to the neighborhoods. Key to its success is getting a core of dedicated stakeholders to commit to quarterly or semi-monthly meetings. They would help direct new residents to a resource center.

Munch asked whether and how any of these ideas would connect with DARA. Heinisch explained that the DeKalb Area Rental Association is an association of property owners. They have a code of ethics they released two weeks ago. They also have an online portal for renters that ask their preferences. That information is then sent out to members to see if anything is available. He said that Police Chief Lowery indicated that DARA properties are usually of higher quality because they police themselves. In the past, DARA has asked certain members to remove themselves from the association because they haven’t upheld their standards. He added that they haven’t reached out to faith-based groups.

Krupp reported that Mike Walsh began an association in her neighborhood. Woodruff said the DeKalb PD tries to encourage neighborhood watches. If there’s a problem in a neighborhood a watch might pop up for a few weeks. The Policy Department helps them start up but they often fizzle out because they don’t have a local champion. They have also tried more of a virtual neighborhood watch using Facebook and Nextdoor. They have had some success, but if the situation is good no one steps up.

Krupp said that there is one group of people who don’t want alerts to go out automatically as it may reinforce the perception that DeKalb is dangerous, but others want to know. The Police to Citizen Portal may answer that problem. Woodruff said that Alert DeKalb is another tool. It’s opt-in except for landline phones and also provides information about weather, traffic, crime, and other topics. Labadi said that DeKalb already has a number of people on the payroll who are

addressing this, so it may be better to redeploy an existing employee. Krupp agreed that no one wants to add to the payroll. Labadi said that a safe and secure environment must be provided not just where the problems are, but around the entire city. The entire community needs to see there are resources nearby.

Woodruff said that NIU police have become great partners and are willing to go off campus to help the City Police Department. Labadi said that Sarah Conway, an excellent speaker on how communities can come together to improve safety and security, is coming to DeKalb.

Pittsley asked whether there is a better way to do a criminal search on someone. Woodruff said that TLO provides a lot of information but it is expensive. That question may be better addressed to Carl Leoni, DeKalb's Crime Free Housing and Inspection Coordinator. He also suggested going to circuit clerk offices.

Krupp observed that someone from NIU's police department should be on this committee. She said that call boxes could be another option for the camera fund. She thought it the equivalent of having a police presence. Woodruff said that he was unsure of their effectiveness. An alternative is an app such as Guardian, which allows the user to have it call a designated person if you don't arrive at your destination when you say you will.

Heinisch asked why trouble-makers stay and harbor in DeKalb? Woodruff said it's because housing is so much cheaper. Apartments rent for much less than in Chicago. Also, DeKalb is a target-rich environment. As a university town, lots of young people who have not yet learned to use alcohol responsibly are easy targets for ne'er-do-wells. Many are coming from nearby, such as Aurora. They may also use false addresses that allow them to enroll in Kishwaukee College. Further, DeKalb and a few other communities have a surplus of empty apartments so Section 8 housing voucher recipients are directed here. It's usually not the voucher recipients who cause problems, it's the friends and relatives who move in with them. Also, Stafford Loan recipients are able to access \$8,000 - \$10,000 in benefits. It's been discovered that if an individual withdraws from all his/her classes at the last minute, the U.S. government will provide the equivalent in cash. This practice puts a significant amount of cash in one's pocket which can sometimes lead to poor life choices.

Pittsley asked whether the Crime Free Housing Bureau had data regarding whether the number of crimes is increasing. Woodruff said that the numbers started high, declined, and then the nature of crime became less serious (e.g. marijuana and peeling paint) and the numbers went up again. Overall, he estimated that property-related problems have decreased by about 50%.

Heinisch said that it's important to distinguish between crime and bad behavior. Woodruff said that property maintenance is another tool for cracking down on derelict property owners. DeKalb had a code enforcement department that was disbanded in 2008. There is a lot of housing stock in the city that isn't doing well.

Heinisch observed that while there is heavy interest in DeKalb rental units because the rent is so low, many of the applicants have bad credit scores and/or questionable backgrounds. Many

property owners are in a financial position where they must rent their units, so they end of selecting from the available pool.

Krupp observed that in 2014 a party video went viral, and that situation could have been another Ferguson. How do we prevent that? Woodruff said that Twitter was used to get the word out. DeKalb sees large crowds of young people every year looking for somewhere to party. The DeKalb police receive training in crowd management. Light towers are helpful in disbanding rowdy crowds, but these are still manpower intensive intense situations.

Munch asked if anyone had additional thoughts regarding the Safe Streets Initiative. Krupp thought it had already been adopted by the City, and other committee members affirmed that it had. Pittsley said that when the bars close, the streets close and cars are towed. Phase 1 was recently announced and Phase 2 will be announced in another month. Tipps said that a press release is going out today and encouraged people to share it. All four phases will be implemented before the start of the next school year. Woodruff said that notifications will be placed on Alert DeKalb.

The ideas suggested to date by this committee were summarized:

- Support of problem-oriented patrolling by the DeKalb police
- Grading the security and safety of apartment complexes and providing that information to prospective tenants
- Launching a voluntary Crime Free Housing initiative in DeKalb
- Exploring an ordinance requiring property owners to install cameras
- Setting up a fund at the DeKalb County Community Foundation for donations to pay for lighting and other security improvements such as call boxes
- Impose a tax (e.g. a Special Service Area tax or Tax Increment Financing) on property owners to fund cameras
- Require or encourage property owners with cameras to make live feeds available to the police
- Sell the home that housed a police office and use the proceeds for lighting or other security improvements in the AGN area
- Publicize the Police to Citizen portal when it's ready
- Encourage the formation of neighborhood watches and associations and help sustain them
- Assign one or more City of DeKalb staff to monitor neighborhoods and/or serve as a liaison between neighborhood associations
- Recognize and reinforce the high levels of cooperation between City of DeKalb and NIU police
- Help arrange opportunities for neighborhood safety and security experts to address residents and property owners, e.g., Sarah Conway
- Support DARA in its efforts to encourage ethical behavior by member property owners
- Research cost-effective resources for doing background searches

- Explore other apps designed to enhance personal safety, such as Guardian and Alert DeKalb
- Support publicizing of the Safe Streets Initiative
- Install additional security kiosks at University Village and other areas requesting them
- Continue the “broken windows” strategy of trimming trees, replacing light bulbs, and providing general upkeep and maintenance

Krupp suggested that it would be useful to research the costs or feasibility of certain projects. Labadi and Woodruff will investigate the cost of security cameras. Labadi will research whether the AGN area is in a TIF district.

Heinisch asked about the possibility of the City purchasing a high-resolution drone. Woodruff said there are legal issues because you can't surveil a house without a search warrant. He thought that added foot and bicycle patrols would be a more cost-effective solution. Heinisch asked if a drone could be purchased just to fly streets. Woodruff said that a military grade drone would be expensive, but he would look into the cost of various options.

At the next meeting of this committee, Woodruff will demonstrate the Police to Citizen Portal.

The need to cost out the initial investment and maintenance costs of shot spotter technology was also raised.

F. Adjournment

Krupp moved to adjourn at 9:50. Pittsley seconded. Motion approved.

Minutes by Diana Robinson, Center for Governmental Studies

Approved by the Neighborhood Safety and Security Subcommittee: April 4, 2018.