Southwest Partnership

Public Safety Committee Meeting

Wednesday February 10th

7pm

801 W Baltimore St

**Present**

Sgt. Robin Blackmon

Officer Virgiree Boles

Jerrell Bratcher

Bif Browning

John Bullock

Karen Fretz

Thomas Hams

Beverly Jacobs

Rob LaPin

Rob Meyer

Richard Parker

Raymond Queen

Khandra Sears

Elizabeth Weber

**Committee Introduction**

Rob LaPin is the interim committee chair. He has a lot of experience with crime and crime prevention and was one of the founding members of the SWP SVW Streets Committee, and was previously public safety director with Ridgley’s Delight.

This Committee was formed because public safety was previously under the Safe, Vibrant, and Walkable Streets Committee, however, public safety and safe streets and public spaces are such a large area that there needs to be a committee to focus solely on the crime prevention aspect.

Rob was appointed by the Southwest Partnership Board as the interim Chair for three meetings. Elections for a Committee Chair, who will serve on the Board of Directors, will be held after the third meeting. Rob has ideas about projects and direction for the Committee but is important to get the neighborhoods involved and have community input. He is hoping to set up groundwork to get subcommittees established for specific areas.

**Suggested Projects**

* HomeWatch: another term for NeighborhoodWatch. One of the most important ways to reduce crime is to get information out to the community and to have members of the community regularly reporting safety concerns. The HomeWatch would consist of block captains who would get information out to the community, take calls from community members, and share information. They would also try to get the neighbors involved in safety activities and the program would include all of the COP walks. A potential for the future would be to coordinate the COP Walks in the area so that they could target areas as needed.
* Alley Gating: Not all allies in the area can be gated, but there are allies that could be gated to reduce crime.
* Surveillance Cameras: City Watch, which is run by the Baltimore City Police Dept, can connect to home security cameras and work with homeowners to install cameras on important corners. Cameras don’t necessarily prevent crimes, but do help to solve them.
* Overtime Police and Private Security Sub Stations: UMB pays for an overtime police officer in Ridgely’s Delight. Police Officers love substations with resources such as wifi, a microwave, and a cot. Sgt. Blackmon reports that sub stations can be frowned on by the department because officers focus on one area (with the station) and don’t patrol the community as a whole. Detroit has mobile substations, but the concern is that they could displace crime.
* Increasing lighting: Block Captains could also provide residences with bright lights to install on porches where needed. The Baltimore Neighborhood Energy Challenge can provide light bulbs that are very inexpensive ($3 a year) to leave on all the time. They were handed out in Ridgley’s Delight to great success.
* Car Tags: There was a spike in car break ins in the Northern District around the Johns Hopkins Homewood Campus. The police handed out red hang tags to go in cars (paid for by JHU)). The front said ‘Stop Thief There’s Nothing to Steal’ and the back had a list of items that should be removed from the car to avoid break ins. They had a reduction of break ins after 30 days.
* Information Blasts: There are a lot of services, including NextDoor and mass text messages and emails and social media which can provide real time crime alerts and updates to community members who are interested.
* Eyes on Car Bumpers: Karen has eyes on the bumper of her car. The eyes are a message to the police that the car owner doesn’t expect to be on the road between 12 and 5am and that the police should pull over the car if they see it on the road then.
* Sectors vs Posts: the Police Department has moved back to Posts vs Sectors, decreasing the area that officers have to patrol and increasing the ability of officers to make connections with the community. In the officers’ and the community members’ experiences posts work better.

Rob’s intention is to have subcommittees focusing on specific projects under the larger Committee.

**Project Discussion**

In the opinion of Sgt Blackmon, the areas to focus on are increasing street lighting and surveillance cameras and the HomeWatch. If community members register with crime watch they will be provided with an anonymous ID number that they can use to report crimes. They do have to fill out paper forms, but forms can be dropped off in groups to the district stations. The ID numbers are long and can be hard to remember, but saying that you have one when reporting issues over the phone adds credibility, especially as opposed to an anonymous complaint or tip.

The Committee discussed the importance of building relationships between community members and between community members and the police. Activities such as National Night Out help to do this, as do the community clean up events that the Community Collaboration Unit is planning.

Western and Southern Police Districts have their community meetings on the same night, which is a challenge for this area as the SWP neighborhoods are so close to the border between the districts. Ms Beverly can attend the Western District meetings and report back to the Committee if she has a ride. The Western District can provide one.

**Subcommittees:**

The Committee decided that the first three projects will be increasing lighting through porch lights on homes, increasing cameras in the area, and developing a HomeWatch program. All subcommittees will ultimately work on community engagement. Elizabeth can support the work of all the subcommittees where needed.

Lights: Bif Browning will lead this subcommittee

Cameras: Thomas Hams will lead this subcommittee.

The HomeWatch subcommittee and what needs to be done will be discussed at the next meeting. The neighborhood associations will need to do the initial work of getting people together and seeing if they are interested in being involved.

**Organizations that need to be involved:**

Rob wants to meet with and invite the major organizations and institutions involved in public safety in the area to the Committee-definitely by the third meeting. These include the Baltimore City Police Department (Southern and Western Districts), the UMB and UM BioPark police and security, the University of Maryland Medical Center security, and the B&O Railroad Museum as well as all of the neighborhood associations and other community members.

Raymond Queen, who works for the BCPD suggested reaching out to Lt Colonel Russell and looking into Federal grants for foot patrols.

Concerns were raised the UMB puts out alarmist notifications and inaccurate public safety material to students and staff, and that the notifications aren’t in real time and aren’t sent to the community as a whole.

**Next Meeting**: Wednesday the 24th at 7pm at the UMB Community Engagement Center (1 N. Poppleton St). The meetings will be held regularly on the fourth Wednesday of the month.