



TO: The Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Michael C. Van Milligen, City Manager

SUBJECT: Safe Community Task Force Recommendations to City Council

DATE: January 28, 2010

The Safe Community Task Force is recommending the adoption of their first set of recommendations.

On September 17, 2009, Mayor Buol and the City Council hosted a community forum that was attended by more than 130 interested residents. The purpose of the forum was to initiate open dialogue on crime issues in our community and how to address them. To continue the dialogue and in response to such a high level of community engagement, the Mayor and City Council appointed 25 citizens to a "Safe Community Task Force" in October. This group of diverse volunteers has held six meetings to holistically look at both the causes of, and solutions to, crime in Dubuque. Beyond the 25 appointed members, the Safe Community Task Force is utilizing sub-committees to get all interested parties involved, and those subcommittees have held regular meetings in addition to the large group meetings.

The Safe Community Task Force is focused on two primary goals:

1. Identifying and acting upon things that most effectively reduce crime and that most effectively reduce the perception of crime.
2. Recognizing that people want to feel safe and identifying ways to provide that feeling of safety for people.

The Task Force began by brainstorming the things that need to be in place in order for a community to be safe, and those items fell into essentially four areas the group decided needed attention: 1) creating neighborhood engagement and social capital; 2) enforcing laws; 3) maintaining the physical environment in neighborhoods; and 4) clarifying myths vs. facts regarding crime in the community and distributing that information to the general public. They have established four subcommittees tasked with investigating each of these areas and bringing forth suggestions to the full task force for consideration.

Recognizing that building neighborhood engagement begins with input, the Neighborhood Engagement Subcommittee is conducting a survey of residents from the Washington, North End and Point neighborhoods. They will use the results of this survey to inform the suggestions they will bring to the Task Force, and they hope that their efforts will begin to identify neighborhood leaders, correct misperceptions, and foster understanding of new and existing cultures. The Physical Environment Subcommittee is focusing on ways to promote the responsibility of tenants and owners for the condition of their property, and to promote neighborhood beautification. The Research and Facts subcommittee is focused on gathering data on crime trends in Dubuque, and the Enforcement Subcommittee is looking at policing and criminal enforcement, as well as housing code enforcement.

The subcommittees have forwarded numerous ideas to the Task Force for consideration. At its meeting on January 14, the Task Force began deliberating on the recommendations and reached consensus to forward the following recommendations to the City Council:

1. Reduce the time between rental inspections for problem properties.
2. Do not allow property owners to receive city, state or federal funding unless their properties are in compliance or the owner is actively working towards compliance.
3. Conduct an expanded crime study to include:
 - a. Comparisons with like communities.
 - b. Longitudinal study of changes in crime rates.
 - c. Multivariate study of arrest records.
 - d. Comparison of actual crime profile in Dubuque with public perception.
 - e. Contextualizing research findings within current criminology and policy literature
 - f. Evidence-based recommendations for effective policy and programming related to crime prevention and community safety within the discussion section of the research report
4. Allow the Task Force to act as conduit for *accurate* information to public, specifically by:
 - a. conveying crime statistics compiled by Captain Russ Stecklein to the general public; and
 - b. documenting and investigating the effectiveness of existing and new efforts to curtail criminal activity in Dubuque, such as Community Oriented Policing, Territory Accountability Design, and the designation of a dedicated police officer for Section 8 housing investigations.
5. Create ways to encourage people to light up their own property and surrounding public property.
6. Install surveillance cameras in high crime areas in public places.
7. Install 911 emergency kiosks.
8. Reduce the time allotted for correcting property violations from the current two years.
9. Encourage development of planned communities through mixed-use zoning.

While the Task Force is ready for these recommendations to be forwarded to the Council for consideration, the Task Force recognizes its work is not complete. They will continue to meet and they anticipate that additional recommendations will be forthcoming. Their next regularly scheduled meeting is on February 18.

I concur with the recommendation and respectfully request Mayor and City Council approval.

Michael C. Van Milligen

MCVM:jh

Attachment

cc: Barry Lindahl, City Attorney
Cindy Steinhauser, Assistant City Manager
Kelly Larson, Human Rights Director