

CITY OF CORAL GABLES
Communication Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 26, 2014, 9:30 a.m.
405 University, Coral Gables, Florida 33134

MEMBERS	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	COMMISSIONERS
	'13	'13	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	'14	
Herb Levin Chair	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	Mayor Jim Cason
Luba De Witt	*	A	P	P	E	P	A	A	*	*	P	E	Commissioner Pat Keon
Les Pantin III	*	P	A	P	P	E	P	P	*	*	P	P	Commissioner Vince Lago
Vacant													Commissioner Frank C. Quesada
Connie Crowther	*	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	*	*	P	P	Vice Mayor William H. Kerdyk, Jr.

A = Absent
E = Excused Absence
P = Present
* = No Meeting

STAFF AND GUESTS:

Commissioner Vince Lago
Cynthia Birdsill, Acting Assistant City Manager
Ed Hudak, Interim Police Chief
Maria Rosa Higgins Fallon, Public Information Manager, Police
Rodolfo Roman, Public Affairs Specialist
Michael Rocha, Multimedia Production Manager, CGTV
Gee Ming Chow, Chief Information Officer, IT
Lemay Ramos, Senior IT Analyst
Eric Machado, IT Analyst

Meeting Motion Summary:

Ms. Crowther made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting. Mr. Pantin, III seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Mr. Levin brought the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

1. Review of the minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting.

Ms. Crowther made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 18, 2014 meeting.

Mr. Pantin, III seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The Board also Excused Ms. De Witt.

2. Discussion with Interim Police Chief Ed Hudak

Chief Hudak gave an update on the Police Department. He noted that as a communications message, that focusing on statistics is not the best public message, as any victim of a crime feels the crime 100%. He noted that the FBI is doing an audit of our statistics, but that statistics are difficult to pin down for a public discussion because the categorization of the crime in question may change as facts are discovered about an incident. The Department for operations uses COMSTAT numbers for how they deploy, so they can stay on top of the current crimes in the community, but they will not be used as a measure of success.

Ms. Higgins-Fallon has been working closely with the Police Chief to develop a new way to implement communication with the media. Now, the communications officers are preparing a videotaped statement for incidents that are sent out to the media along with the press release. This is allowing us to control the message with the media. This has also assisted with the success rate of catching criminals, as people have seen suspects on the news and quickly called in tips that have led to arrests.

The Police Department is also utilizing social media to solve crimes. Chief Hudak notes that Facebook has an extensive facial recognition program. In addition, social media like twitter allows them to put a message out quickly to a much larger population.

Since the Chief took office, there have been 35 cases with 38 arrests.

The Chief noted that he has a philosophy of transparency as well as community engagement so that the public when they come into contact with our officers have a positive experience with the department.

The Chief announced that Ms. Higgins-Fallon was moving over to the Police Department to handle their public relations, as she has been a tremendous resource that has been helpful in getting the appropriate message out, especially as department visibility has increased. In addition, her ability to communicate in English and Spanish is a skill set that is necessary for the department. She is also working with CGTV to put together Crime Stop Tips that will be broadcast on our cable station, and will be shown on YouTube. The plan is to have recognizable sports figures, coaches, and television personalities participate in these spots.

It is important for the community to be involved in being alert to crimes. The community involvement has been helpful to the department in solving crimes. Community engagement also acts as a deterrent to criminals who not only have to worry about being seen by police, they need to worry about everyone in the community. The quicker we can get our message out, the quicker we can catch criminals.

The key message that the Chief wants to get out is that we care about the community. Mr. Levin inquired about staffing levels. The Chief noted that 7 new officers were just sworn in, but the department is still down 19 officers. Another 5 will be coming out of the academy, but there are retirements that will affect the numbers. There are supposed to be 191 officers in the department. We want visibility as if we are fully staffed with boots on the ground, so we are using overtime right now. We have higher standards for officers than other forces like a 2 year degree, which also affects the speed at which we can attract new officers. We also need to staff up our communications operators by at least 7. Therefore, we are working on strategies for recruitment. As we increase community development like streetscape or annexations that may increase policing needs, the Chief will reassess department staffing needs with the Manager and Commission.

The Chief addressed the MRAP vehicles. He is reassessing the equipment for the vehicles, but they will be beneficial for situations like hurricanes. They are also fun for the Big Toy Extravaganza. However, he is going to be conservative in spending money on these vehicles, and does not plan to have a military presence in the City.

The City-Wide Anti-Crime Committee was recently revived by the City Commission, which will allow the Chief and the department to communicate more directly with the community.

The Chief has been looking at an app prototype called ZAPP that allows the department to have direct view of a situation. He is also interested in exploring an easier path to the police department web page than by going through the department menu on the City's website.

Commissioner Lago noted that he has heard from many residents that our current policing strategies are working, and that they like the community engagement.

3. Update on Mobile App by the Information Technology Department

Commissioner Lago stated that he received feedback from citizens, visitors and staff that the City needs to move from the stone age to have a mobile application. While the concept originated with Commissioner Quesada, Commissioner Lago has been moving this project forward with the Information Technology Department, as the APP will allow streamlined communication with citizens. The launch for the APP is planned for December, and with proper marketing we can have a large number of users for the APP.

Mr. Chow noted that the APP is online, but as a soft launch. The graphics and specific icons are still being developed. The APP will also allow for alerts like hurricane warnings and other public safety messages. Commissioner Lago mentioned we could also send notifications of upcoming Commission meetings as an example. Mr. Chow then showed the Board the structure of the APP.

The first icon is the Customer Connect. It is a feature requested by Commissioner Quesada. This allows citizens to send in requests, such as uploading a photo of a pothole that needs to be fixed. In addition, the APP provides information on parking in garages and lots. Commissioner Lago says we are behind and that cities like Seattle can even tell you where specific parking spaces are. The City will provide the additional feature of parking space availabilities in the garages, lots and street-side locations by the first quarter of next year.

The APP will also include the trolley route and stops by December. It will be enhanced by the first quarter next year to have estimated time of trolley arrival at the stops dynamically. In addition, the APP will also have information on businesses, UM events for residents, cultural activities, and the FIU historic project developed by the Clerk.

The Economic & Cultural Development Department, CGTV and the BID will assist with marketing and promoting the APP. Commissioner Lago stated that we should plan a serious launch, including asking all the merchants to actively market the APP, especially if we can promote the merchants. Ms. Birdsill noted that we could consider linking to the BID's data, as the City has a long standing policy of not directly advertising.

Mr. Chow mentioned that the BID is interested in providing Wi-Fi downtown. Commissioner Lago said we could look at this during the Streetscape project. Chief Hudak mentioned the Police department has some routers that were going to make the police cars Wi-Fi hotspots that are no longer needed, and could be repurposed for use on the trolleys.

Mr. Levin mentioned that staff should consider providing Spanish translation for the App. Mr. Chow said that this is not currently available, but that he will inquire with the vendor.

Mr. Ramos noted that the APP is social media enabled as well.

Code Enforcement will be using the Code Enforcement portion of the APP in November. Public Works will also use the APP in April for their internal work requests. Mr. Pantin, III asked whether the departments were already able to respond to requests. Mr. Machado said yes they are all currently responding to requests. Ms. Birdsill noted that Mr. Machado had provided training to all the departments. Mr. Machado reported that they are working with the employees in the field with their smart phones. Ms. Birdsill encouraged the board members to download the APP and provide any feedback while we are still in the soft launch.

Mr. Levin noted that once the APP is ready, the public affairs group needs to heavily market it. Ms. Birdsill said that they were hoping to be able to have a genius bar at the Board Appreciation Reception in December to encourage all the City board members to download the APP as well the Pay to Park App, especially as our board members are some of the best ambassadors for the City.

4. CGTV PSA's

Ms. Higgins-Fallon showed the board a couple of PSA's that have been developed with CGTV.

5. Other City Business

Ms. Higgins-Fallon thanked the board, and expressed her heartfelt gratitude for having the opportunity to work with them.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

The next Communications Committee meeting will be held on November 20, 2014.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Birdsill, Acting Assistant City Manager