

City of Gardner, Massachusetts
City Council Public Safety Committee
Minutes of the Meeting of January 17, 2017

Chairman Paul Tassone called the Public Safety Committee meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 17, 2017 in the City Council Chamber. Committee member Councillor Karen Hardern was also present. Councillor Matthew Vance arrived at 6:34 p.m.

Other officials present and/or participating were Public Health Director Jennifer Susen-Roy; Police Chief Neil Erickson; Deputy Chief of Police John Bernard; Local Building Inspector Roland Jean; Councillor Marc Morgan; and, City Clerk Alan Agnelli.

I. Minutes of Prior Meeting(s).

On a motion by Councillor Karen Hardern and seconded by Chairman Paul Tassone, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the December 19, 2016 Public Safety Committee Meeting, as printed.

II. Department Updates

Public Health Director Jennifer Susen-Roy

- The Department has been experiencing multiple problems over the last few months with Waste Management's ability to timely retrieve trash across the City, as well as for damaged Toters®. Ms. Susen-Roy cited trash that was not retrieved and confused route drivers. She scheduled a meeting with representatives of Waste Management this week to address many problems. Councillor Morgan cited the Health Department's efficient response each and every time that he contacted the Department with trash removal problems.
- The Department posted "cease and desist order" placards on three local establishments since they failed to provide the Department with all required documentation for 2017 annual license renewals. She said that two of the three have complied and are operating, while one business remains closed.
- Septic system percolation tests are at an all-time high.
- Warrants have been sought against violators of health and safety codes under the Attorney General's Abandoned Housing Initiative (AHI).
- Building Department extremely helpful with inspection assistance.

Local Building Inspector Roland Jean:

- 56 Nichols Street multi-family house will be razed as soon as National Grid terminates the power feed.
- Hazardous materials abatement work to begin soon at the former Gardner Cinema on Parker Street. Fencing has been erected along Connors Street.
- City Hall Annex heating system upgrades completed last week.
- City Hall Annex new window installation nearly completed (two installations remaining).
- Four zoning cases slated for February ZBA meeting.

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Chief of Police Neil Erickson:

- One officer has been out on injured leave (work related) and his return is questionable. He expects to know by the end of the week if the officer will return to duty.
- HVAC problems still plague the Police Station.
- 2 officers were recently certified as R.A.D. instructors (Rape-Agression-Defense) through a program provided by MWCC.
- CPR classes will be offered to residents next month by the Fire and Police departments at a cost of \$45 per person for materials and licensing.
- The next Civilian Police Academy will be offered at the end of April. Lieutenant Braks will be the instructor.
- The new communication system has been installed and the contract was signed with CTC (the project manager) for the next phase, which he hopes will in full operation by February 2018.
- Seeking additional grant funds for additional equipment/upgrades through the Community Compact.
- Adequate space available for additional communities to tie-in.

III. #9716 – An Application by Brian’s Auto Sales, 549 West Broadway, for a Class 3 Motor Vehicle Junk License (New)

Brian Michaud, the Applicant, informed the Committee that he has been selling used cars at the location since 1983.

Chairman Tassone cited correspondence from the City Solicitor with respect to operating a motor vehicle junkyard at that location. He suggested that Mr. Michaud be afforded leave to withdraw his application.

On a motion Councillor Hardern and seconded by Chairman Tassone, it was voted to recommend that Brian Michaud, d/b/a Brian’s Auto Sales, be granted leave to withdraw his application for a Class 3 Motor Vehicle Junk License at 549 West Broadway.

IV. #9730 – An Application by R&R Motors for Renewal of a Class 2 Motor Vehicle Dealer License

Police Chief Erickson informed the Committee that the Department has no concerns with R&R Motors and recommended that the license be granted.

On a motion Councillor Hardern and seconded by Councillor Tassone, on recommendation of the Chief of Police, it was voted to recommend to the City Council to grant to R&R Motors, a Class 2 Motor Vehicle Dealer License at 7 Donlan Street.

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V. Request by the Mayor to Designate Certain Parking Spaces on City Hall Avenue and on Connors Street for “Post Office Employee Parking Only.”

Chairman Tassone opened the discussion by asking for input concerning the proposal to designate parking spaces on City Hall Avenue and on Connors Street only for Post Office employees. He noted that the spaces in question are presently unmetered, unrestricted, and available for anyone to use.

Deputy Chief of Police John Bernard noted that some Post Office employees park their vehicles on Connors Street in the spaces directly behind the City Hall Auditorium.

Chairman Tassone asked that if the City restricts the parking spaces, would it then be required to provide Restricted Parking stickers to the Post Office employees?

Deputy Chief Bernard noted that most of the Post Office’s employees arrive to work early in the morning and leave in the evening (5AM – 6PM).

Councilor Vance questioned whether designating a certain number of parking spaces for Post Office employees would create problems for other members of the public seeking parking in the area.

Chairman Tassone stated that it is his opinion that the Mayor’s ad-hoc committee’s proposal seeks to encourage postal employees to park closest to the Post Office.

Councillor Vance suggested that the proposal simply relocates the same number of vehicles to other areas. He noted that persons visiting the Binnall House would have to look elsewhere for parking spaces.

Councillor Hardern stated that the City has to begin the conversation about the lack of parking in the Downtown area and that it needs to consider all options.

Councillor Tassone suggested that the meters along City Hall Avenue in front of the old Police Station be removed.

Councillor Vance questioned whether the Safety Committee has the authority to designate restricted parking spaces.

City Clerk Agnelli noted that the City Council, by Ordinance, may restrict parking or to designate parking zones.

Chairman Tassone recognized Councillor Marc Morgan.

Councillor Morgan questioned whether it is the City’s responsibility to provide parking for employees. He cited MART as having to lease space in order for its employees to park their personal vehicles.

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Police Chief Erickson said that the idea is to relieve parking congestion in front of and directly across the street from the Binnall House by relocating post office employees behind City Hall auditorium and to City Hall Avenue.

Deputy Chief Bernard stated that post office employees are parking in front of the old Police Station, which will affect parking for customers at the new business planning to open at that location.

VI. Request by the Fire Department for Authorization to Dispose of a 2002 Dodge Ram pickup.

On a motion Councillor Vance and seconded by Councillor Hardern, it was voted to authorize the Fire Department to dispose of a 2002 Dodge Ram pickup.

VII. Landlord-Tenant Anti-Crime Ordinance

Resident Dexter Lison addressed the Committee about a proposal to implement an ordinance that would require landlords to evict tenants who repeatedly engage in criminal activity. He referenced an ordinance from Dover, Delaware that requires landlords to participate. He said that many individuals and families have relocated to Gardner for cheaper rents and then continue to commit the same crimes that they committed in their previous communities. He said that 6 families have been responsible for 24 to 30 Police complaints, adding that 8 out of 10 homes near his house have been broken into. He suggested that the Safety Committee submit the Dover Ordinance to the Law Department to determine what elements could be adopted in Gardner, as some of the provisions could be contrary to Massachusetts laws. Police Chief Erickson agreed with Mr. Lison and concurred that the Law Department should review the Ordinance. He added that anything that would help Police, landlords, and tenants to fight crime is worth pursuing.

On a motion Councillor Vance and seconded by Councillor Hardern, it was voted to request that the Law Department conduct a review of the Dover Ordinance and to advise the Committee if any of its provisions are allowable under Massachusetts laws.

The Committee postponed further discussion until it receives a reply from the law Department.

Adjournment.

On a motion Councillor Vance and seconded by Councillor Hardern, it was voted to adjourn at 7:02 p.m.