

October 7, 2006

Licton Springs Community Council Report for October

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for October 4, 2006

The October meeting got under way at the stroke of 7:00 p.m. (right on time). The guest for the evening was Seattle's Mayor Greg Nickels. After the usual introductions and the search for the "press," (none came), the Mayor gave us a short run-down on the state of the City's proposed budget. We are still looking at a potential loss of \$20 Million in the coming years (2008). This was due to some changes made in Olympia.

The Mayor acknowledged that he understood that the main concern of the Advisory Council is "PUBLIC SAFETY." He stressed that the City would have a "zero tolerance" policy toward any acts of violence on our streets. He also stated that in the coming year we might add more officers. Over the past two years the Mayor and Council have added 33 patrol positions to the Police Department, increasing the number of uniformed officers available to answer calls in neighborhoods across the City. The Mayor's proposed 2007-2008 Budget would add six more officers next year, bringing the total number to 39.

The Mayor asked for questions from the floor (there were the "usual suspects," but not as many attendees as I thought might show up). Pressed again about the number of new officers versus the number leaving the force by attrition, the Mayor said we have had a net gain. Of the 25 new officers, the North Precinct will get seven (the North Precinct covers half the City of Seattle). Asked about his objectives in the area of "public safety," his response was "The staffing level study will take into account the new geo policing efforts, which will redraw patrol boundaries and allow the Police Department to use existing officers more effectively. It will examine what kind of crimes and locations may need additional police resources. And it will look at the funding levels necessary to hire additional police officers in the coming years. We need to analyze the results from the 'Geo-Policing Study' and go from there."

After a number of folks danced around the subject, the real question "Are We Going to get More Cops?" was asked, answer: "We need to do a better job with the current tools." It was pointed out that crime is on the increase in most if not all major cities, and that includes Seattle. Drug trafficking, homicide, robberies (we lead the nation in bank stick-ups) are all increasing. The Mayor says there is no magic bullet. A number of attendees pointed out that the quality of life in Seattle has been declining for some time and would like to see a more pro-active

approach to changing that, once quiet neighborhoods have become the hangout for drug dealers and prostitutes. People do not feel comfortable or safe walking their own streets after dark (or sometimes during the day). Spending time in a park has become a "High Risk" activity. These people are all stressed that we need (and want) more Police Officers NOW!

Several speakers pointed to the lax (or lack of) traffic enforcement. Running red lights has become an epidemic (no news there). Speed limits (especially on arterials) are a joke. Note: all traffic enforcement comes from "down town." In police matters, the Mayor defers to Chief Kerlikowske (we wouldn't want a politician making those kind of decisions).

After the Mayor thanked us for the invitation to attend our meeting and answer questions, he was on his way. What followed was a collection of impressions from the other attendees as to the position of the Mayor on "Public Safety." The heavy consensus was the Mayor has his own agenda and the rest of us can expect much the same as we've seen in the last few years. (Ergo, if you don't like the response time to police calls, get used to it.) It seems a little odd that the Mayor has been more vocal about non-existent "gun show loopholes" than the crime on his own streets. (In his 2007-2008 Budget, the Mayor recommended spending new money on Seattle Center, the environment, the homeless and a new "park-rangers" program to patrol downtown parks.) I guess the bottom line is we can expect to see the status quo continue unless we get some relief from the City Council. (Don't hold your breath there either.)

Every concerned citizen needs to call, write, e-mail, and fax the Council and the Mayor's Office if there is any chance of putting the increase in police officers on the fast track (or attend Council meetings).

Ken Thompson

P.S. If you're interested in the crime statistics for Seattle, they are available on the City website (by neighborhood).