

December 9, 2005

Licton Springs Community Council Report for December

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for December 7, 2005

At about 7:07 p.m., NPAC President Pete Rogerson called the meeting to order and introduced the guest for the evening, City Council Member Richard McIver. There were also several other "new faces" in the crowd as well, namely a new "GAIN" off-shoot focusing on the north Greenwood area around 142nd. An increase in area crime has brought out folks from the Wedgwood and Freemont neighborhoods as well.

Although the meeting was lightly attended, (about thirty people) everyone was anxious to hear what Councilmember Richard McIver had to say. Mr. McIver focused on budget issues facing the City. Some of the positive points mentioned by the Councilman included a budget excess (unexpected) as the result of \$17 Million in Real Estate Excise Tax revenue. It seems there has been a flood of investment in this area by those seeking potential long-term gain (insurance companies, investment bankers, etc). Someone is betting that real estate is going to do better than the stock market, mutual funds or bonds. The upside of all this is that there will be no "cuts" in the coming year's budget. The "excess" funds will be used to restore some cuts that have been made in previous years. The year's BIG winner is the library system. "Public Safety" and "Health and Human Services" are other areas to get a major share of the coming windfall.

Questions about how to address "social services" have become (or are becoming) a "Pandora's Box." The City is beginning to ask questions like "Should those on the public dole be required to perform some type of service to the City?" Or "should chronic drug and alcohol abusers be required to attend and complete rehabilitation programs before receiving any assistance from the City?" Another pressing issue is what are we going to do about housing prisoners when the City is no longer able to rent space at the County facility? And the list goes on. There are lots of arguments and very few answers. One of the "social ills" that has been on the increase is the area of "elder abuse." Maybe it's just because there are more of us "old folks" or we are such easy pickings, but protecting the elderly is another "social ill" that will be demanding more attention (and money) in the future.

Another concern being addressed at this time is the question of "alcohol impact areas," most notably the central core and the area surrounding the University of Washington. Mr. McIver is of the opinion that curbing alcohol sales in specific

areas does little to stop the problem - it just moves to a new location. The most likely "new location" from the central core would be Councilman McIvers' district. Mr. McIver is more inclined to favor intervention and treatment for those most affected.

NPAC's Vice President George Holzapfel emphasized to the Councilman that our primary area of concern is "Public Safety." Everything else is secondary. We in Seattle still have a chronic shortfall in the areas of police and firefighters. Even though we are going to get 25 new police officers, the City is still way short in per-capita staffing. Had it not been for the letters and pressure directed toward the City Council, we might not be seeing even those 25.

Please note that in his public statements about these "new officers," the Mayor states that each of the five precincts will get five officers. (The North Precinct is half the landmass of the City of Seattle, and we'd get one-fifth of the new officers. What's wrong with this picture?) The Councilman was also reminded of the most common complaint heard about public safety issues.....how come it takes so long to get a police response? (This is a re-occurring theme, too many calls, too few officers to respond.)

The City's budget for the coming year is about 2.9 Billion dollars including Utilities.

Acting Precinct Captain, Mike Washburn, had the following incidents to report:

- (1) A bank robber at 85th and Greenwood was caught.
- (2) A man with a knife abducted a woman near 148th and Greenwood. He left the area in a van which was traced to a home in Snohomish. After an all night stake-out, he was taken into custody (a repeat offender).
- (3) A home that had been identified (by GAIN) as a problem area was being watched by undercover officers and they soon had probable cause to get a search warrant. Result: arrests for drugs, guns, stolen property.
- (4) An assault at 1100 Northwest and 59th by a 53-year old man against his "girlfriend" endangered several children.
- (5) The prostitution along the Aurora corridor has resulted in the arrest of 17 "johns" last month.

These were some of the calls that the Precinct Officers were able to answer. However, there were others that didn't get a response, or the response was too

long in coming. One such incident took place at the Northgate Mall. Mall security had observed a drug sale in one of the bathrooms and called 911 for police assistance. No officers were available to answer this call (the re-occurring theme). Despite the squeeze on overtime, Captain Washburn says there will be a police presence at the Mall during the Holiday shopping season.

The word is that next month's special guest has four legs and a cold nose (and is someone's best friend).

Ken Thompson