

January 5, 2006

Licton Springs Community Council Report for January

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for January 4, 2006

Despite the night coinciding with a major football game, we had a very good turnout. However, one has to be honest and say this first meeting of the year really did “go to the dogs.” The evening’s Special Guest, as introduced by President Pete Rogerson, was Seattle Police Department Officer Ian Polhemus and his faithful companion police dog “Kaiser.”

Officer Polhemus is a 13-year veteran and has worked with “Kaiser” for the last two and a half years. The Seattle Police Department has 11 dogs in all. Two of those dogs specialize in drug searches and one is trained specifically to detect explosives.

Officially the K-9 units are known as “Criminal Apprehension Dogs.” The primary mission of these animals is to track and detain suspects as well as recover evidence. They do NOT engage in “search and rescue” or other types of recovery work. Kaiser is a three and a half year old purebred German Shepard, and was purchased by the City for about \$6,000.00 (that sounds like a lot of money, but he earns his keep).

All of the dogs working for the City are male. Male dogs tend to be more aggressive and focused in their work. (Officer Polhemus made that comment, not me.) Each of the dogs works exclusively with one officer and will respond (or go to work) only to that officer’s commands. (The one exception is in the event that the dog’s handler should come under attack . . . the dogs will respond . . . aggressively.)

Officer Polhemus and Kaiser “speak” German and English. Some of Seattle’s K-9’s are bilingual but they all “speak” English. All the dogs are retired at age ten, and Kaiser will become a full-time family member with the Polhemus clan.

Due to the strenuous workouts these animals go through on a day-to-day basis, few live past age 13. Oddly, an attack on a Police Officer is a Class “A” felony, but an attack on a K-9 is a Class “C” felony. While tracking the “bad guy”, the K-9’s all wear vests equipped with reflective material and a strobe light. If the situation involves chasing and armed individual, the K-9’s get a nine pound protective vest (that’s three times as heavy as the vest worn by the dog’s handler)!

Some of the more interesting questions asked of Officer Pohemus were:

- (1) How long can the dogs retain a scent once they have been introduced to it?
ANSWER: "For the rest of their life."
- (2) Do the dogs get a special diet? ANSWER: "Yes, due to the vigorous demands of their job, they get a diet that is extra high in protein (greater than the grocery or pet store variety)."
- (3) Does Seattle's rain affect the dogs' ability to track suspects? ANSWER: "Rain in Seattle is seldom of the volume or intensity that would degrade the dogs' ability to track suspects . . . that takes a real gully-washer."

It was also noted that the K-9 units do give "ride-a-longs." The patrol cars do have a fence between the front and rear seat, but it was not clear where the "guest" rides. Hmm, I guess we could all bark at the moon, eh?

In other news, 20 new officers will be ready to graduate from the Police Academy in June. (No word yet on how many officers the North Precinct might see.)

For those that might still be looking for the anti-theft device (the club) at a substantial savings . . . find it on the web . . . www.SNGI.org.

To keep abreast of the legal issues in the neighborhood, read the newsletter at: http://www.cityofseattle.net/law/precinct_liaisons/newsletters/.

If that doesn't get you there, then click on "quarterly newsletter." There is some interesting reading on those pages!

Ken Thompson