

October 8, 2007

Licton Springs Community Council Report for October

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for October 3, 2007

At 7:07 p.m., the October 2007 meeting of the North Precinct Advisory Committee got under way with Jack Heavner as the new President. Also new faces filling various positions are Curtis Gehrke as Vice President and William Murray as Secretary. (There has been a shake-up at the top.) Once again we have a representative from the Maple Leaf Community.

The Featured guest for the evening was Lieutenant Steve Wilske, head of the Special Weapons and Tactics ("SWAT") team. SWAT was formed in 1980 and became a free-standing unit within the Police Department in 1984. Prior to 1984, the members all had other jobs within the Department and it took quite a while to respond to a "situation." Today Seattle SWAT has two squads for a total of 29 members. (Five are officers.) They are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If accepted into the SWAT unit, new members are on a 30-day trial. The training is rigorous and on going (sometimes much more so than envisioned by either the officer or other family members). Members of the team must re-qualify both physically and in proficiency twice a year.

As a rule the SWAT unit is deployed to deal with subjects that have barricaded themselves in some threatening manner, hostage situations, people that are suffering some form of mental crisis (again, threatening). The Team is always in play when VIP's are in our area, which would be people like the President or other high-ranking political figures or foreign dignitaries. (They do NOT provide cover for movie stars, rock stars or their like.)

What followed was a period of questions and answers and show and tell. I kept my questions simple and somewhat benign. (I'm sure I could get more than a few of those present a little warm under the collar.) Lieutenant Wilske brought a couple of his "tools of the trade" and described some of the others that were a little large (and expensive) to pack around. In the future he might bring some more. I wish he'd brought the little thing that looks like a baseball, but is really a robotic (spy) camera.

Some of the other "News" from the Precinct would include the word that Lieutenant Carmen Best is moving over to the Narcotics unit. Captain Washburn commented on the results of "Operation Sobering Thought." That was the sting operation conducted among the nightlife spots, etc. There were some arrests and they did shake up the nightclubs and bars at least for a while. Neil Hansen had some information relating to identification theft. It has been suggested by some that a person should NOT sign the

back of their bank or credit cards. (Make sales personnel ask for ID.) This idea got bantered about for a short time and I don't think anyone reached a consensus. (I don't own one, so there!) Tentatively, next month we should be hearing from Kathryn Olson, the Director of the Office of Professional Accountability.

New Police Station:

A search for a new location for the North Precinct Police Station is to be conducted by the "Fleets and Facilities Department." The proposed budget includes \$705,000 for this effort. The existing station is far too small and is inadequate to house the currently assigned personnel. This requires detectives to occupy leased space next to the station. The current location does not allow for expansion. The North Precinct will benefit from the addition of officers through the Neighborhood Policing Initiative over the next five years. I will have more as word becomes available.

Ken Thompson