

August 8, 2006

Licton Springs Community Council Report for August

North Precinct Advisory Council Report for August 2, 2006

The "regulars" began arriving shortly before 7:00 p.m. on this warm August evening. Not a bad crowd given the summer vacation season. Shortly after the hour (7:05 p. m.), President Pete Rogerson called our meeting to order.

There were a few new faces to be introduced. Since our guest for the evening was running a little late, we started with a recap of the events in the North Precinct given by now "Captain" Mike Washburn. At the North Precinct Open House (July) "Acting" Captain Washburn was presented his official Captain's bars by Chief Kerlikowske. A fitting touch since the Captain's family and friends were all in attendance. (About 450 people made it to the Open House...better hot dogs than the library had!)

Special recognition was given to Officer Steve Clark for his exceptional service in trying to locate a missing child at Bitter Lake (the thought was the child might have gone into the lake). Officer Clark shed his pistol belt and uniform and borrowed a face mask and went on a Rescue/Recovery mission in the lake. Now that's dedication! (Well, it was also a very warm day.) The child was later discovered sleeping under a pile of clothing.

And then there were the other day-to-day events, like break-ins, shootings, the Fremont sightings, etc. The plus side of things would include the "August Night Out" event. In the north end alone there were some 580 registered participants. (That's a lot of parties to attend.) The number is up about 70 over last year. These events are a real plus for the officers as well as the "block-watch" people. Consider that going to a night-out event is one of the few times officers get to meet people in a good mood. They are not summoned because someone has been injured, robbed or threatened and there's usually food and a chance to rub elbows with the everyday citizen. That doesn't happen often enough!

Shortly after beginning the recap of the events that have transpired over the last two months, Council member Peter Steinbrueck arrived and sat attentively before being introduced by NPAC President Pete Rodgerson. Over the years the North Precinct Council has consistently pressed for more officers for the Seattle Police Department. Councilman Steinbrueck has been supportive of that and continues to be. We know that property crimes are up, (the Steinbreucks have been victims three times over the years). There is an ominous increase in gang activity and gang-related crime. These trends continue to grow. What might the solutions be? Councilman Steinbreuck thinks we start with the review of the Geo-Policing study now being conducted. Just adding

more officers to the force without knowing how to best deploy them won't get us the most bang for our buck. If we are to add more officers (as many as 250 over time), we need to show that positive results are being achieved. This is a budget year. The economy is looking better and that should help to achieve our goals. (Remember, those goals must be sustainable.) In the past we have asked to have 25 new officers added to Seattle's Police Force. Last year we got 16 citywide. (The North Precinct got five of those.) Getting 25 officers each year is not just a question of money; it's also a question of qualified personal being recruited. (We are not going to lower standards just to meet a numerical goal.) Councilman Steinbreuck is solidly behind the issues of Public Safety and will push to achieve our stated goals.

The floor was opened for questions, and there were many. Here's where things got novel. It was so refreshing to hear REAL answers being given to REAL questions. Some past Council member attendees were more "duck and dodge" than substance.

In the course of the discussion, the question of the annexation of the "Highlands" came up. That is the area south of West Seattle that is currently in King County. The County would like Seattle to annex this area. The County is going broke and is strapped for resources to provide public services to this area. If the City were to annex this area, it would be at a cost of about \$5 Million a year. Where do we come up with that additional cash? The area in question is largely residential or small business and doesn't provide a large tax base, so would provide little income to the City. If you get a chance to vote on this issue, keep that in mind!

Throughout his discussion on police staffing limits and levels, Councilman Steinbreuck made reference to positions expressed in a publication that was made available to us. That publication should help clear up some of the questions about geo-policing and accountability. In the interest of brevity, I'm not going to publish it in this report. (I hear that collective sigh of relief - the short version is nine pages long.) However, If you go to this website: www.cdri.com/officer1000/articleuse/htm, you can read it for yourself (long or short version). There, that should limit my use of cyberspace, eh?

And that shall mark the end of my report for August.

Ken Thompson