



## CITY OF WAUWATOSA

7725 WEST NORTH AVENUE  
WAUWATOSA, WI 53213  
Telephone: (414) 479-8917  
Fax: (414) 479-8989  
<http://www.wauwatosa.net>

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, May 8, 2007

PRESENT: Alds. Birschel, Didier, Donegan, Herzog, Krill (8:24 p.m.), Meaux (8:26 p.m.), Minear -7

EXCUSED: Ald. Treis

ALSO J. Archambo, City Admin.; A. Kesner, City Atty.; Asst. Chief J. Hevey, Fire Dept.;  
PRESENT Chief B. Weber, Police Dept.

Ald. Herzog as Chair called the meeting to order at 8:19 p.m. -5

#### **Proposed Ordinance – Public Safety Radio Communications in Public and Private Buildings**

Asst. Chief Hevey reported on a proposed ordinance to address a public safety communications problem within some public and private buildings in Wauwatosa. The problem is particularly prevalent in large buildings of concrete construction, especially in the medical complex, wherein police and firefighters lose communication with the incident commander, other officers, or the dispatch center. With the amount of new construction occurring in the city, he felt it is important to take this step to improve public safety radio communications. The proposed ordinance would cover communications systems used by all communities participating in the Milwaukee County system as well as communities such as Elm Grove and Brookfield that are part of the mutual aid network and have radios with Milwaukee County frequencies. Asst. Chief Hevey cited two recent incidents at Froedtert Hospital where there was no communication among the incident commander and dispatchers and firefighters inside the building. In one case, hospital radio equipment was borrowed. Some buildings have already installed the necessary equipment in their infrastructure, including the new Children's Hospital clinic building and the Medical College biomedical research building. Fire Chief Redman and Police Chief Weber indicated their support for the proposal.

(Ald. Krill present. -6)

As a public safety issue, City Attorney Kesner noted, the Council has the power to require all existing buildings to comply with the ordinance, in which case an implementation timeline should be included. Less forcefully, it could be applied only to new construction. As drafted, the ordinance gives up to three years to comply, once notified, which Asst. Chief Hevey felt would provide adequate time for budgeting and researching vendors. He said that at the two Children's Hospital buildings where the system was installed as part of other infrastructure, the total cost was \$7,500. At the Medical College biomedical research building, the cost was \$50,000, mostly attributed to labor since the system was an add-on after communications problems were identified at the basement and sub-basement levels.

(Ald. Meaux present. -7)

Responding to questions from the committee, Asst. Chief Hevey explained that the equipment would not be required in buildings where the department finds that radio systems work effectively. The proposed ordinance outlines testing procedures. There have been no problems associated with use of fire or police

radios inside hospitals, even in areas with sensitive equipment. He estimated that between 12 and 18 existing buildings would be affected, but equipment potentially would also be needed in some of the new construction now under review. Existing buildings identified so far include the basements of Froedtert East and West, the tunnel between Froedtert and Children's Hospitals, all Medical College buildings, the north and south towers at Mayfair, and Wauwatosa East and West High Schools and Longfellow Middle School. In Los Angeles a few years back, typical costs ranged from 15 to 30 cents per square foot, the typical cost for a \$150,000 square foot building was \$30,000.

Asst. Chief Hevey described the proposed ordinance as similar to those requiring fire alarms and sprinkler systems in buildings of a certain size or specific occupancy. Sprinklers are mandated for existing buildings only if the type of occupancy changes to a use that falls under the sprinkler ordinance. The requirement for public safety communication equipment in all or part of a building would become part of the process for obtaining an occupancy permit. Motorola can model a building and identify where problems would occur. Muskego and Bayside have identified similar problems as well as Naperville, Illinois; Bayside's ordinance was used as a model.

In answer to further questions, Asst. Chief Hevey said that they have the ability to cross patch frequencies, which helps but does not boost the outgoing signal. They are tied to the technology being used right now. The first facility to install the equipment was Mayfair Mall, where police found there were communications problems. The ordinance would not apply to single or two-family dwellings that are not in commercial or institutional use, which is consistent with national standards and part of the Bayside ordinance. There is no problem with radio operations in the basement of the civic center/city hall building.

Regarding creation of an appeals process, Mr. Kesner said that appeals related to cost might come to a committee and the Common Council and other appeals could come to the Board of Examiners and Appeals, which handles building code issues. Hardship could be tied to a percentage of the cost of the building, a dollar amount, or left to the property owner to define.

Asst. Chief Hevey said that some grants might be available, particularly for medical complex buildings. He noted that the cost of this equipment is much less than for sprinkler systems. It is a safety factor for firefighters and law enforcement officers that go into the buildings.

The Chair suggested inviting input from the school district to find out if three years would allow enough time for them to budget without being burdensome. Mr. Kesner said that representatives of buildings mentioned by Asst. Chief Hevey could be invited to attend or submit comments.

Moved by Ald. Didier, seconded by Ald. Krill to invite comments from representatives of the buildings identified by Fire Department staff for review at the next meeting --

Some committee members favored moving ahead with the ordinance as it pertains to new construction, meanwhile working on an appeals process for existing construction. Mr. Kesner explained that additional language could be added following review at the next meeting.

With consent of the second, Ald. Didier amended the motion to request that, in addition to inviting comments from representatives of buildings identified by staff, the City Attorney draft an ordinance that addresses new and existing buildings and includes a hardship option as well as an appeals process for review at the next meeting. Ayes: 7

**Proposed Ordinance – Floodplain Districts**

The committee reviewed a proposed ordinance updating the existing floodplain ordinance to conform with Department of Natural Resources requirements. Updating also ensures that the city’s standing in the National Flood Insurance Program and the ability of residents to purchase flood insurance is not jeopardized. The draft ordinance has been approved by DNR staff. It can be changed when new maps come forward reflecting changes in the Hart Park and county grounds areas. The Plan Commission unanimously recommended approval.

Moved by Ald. Birschel, seconded by Ald. Donegan to recommend introduction of an ordinance and adoption of a resolution setting a public hearing date. Ayes: 7

The meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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