



CITY OF WAUWATOSA
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LEGISLATION, LICENSING & COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Meeting – Tuesday January 11, 2011

Committee Room #1 – 7:00 PM

PRESENT: Alds. Birschel, Causier, Hanson, Nikceвич, Roznowski – 5

EXCUSED: Ald. Wilson

ALSO PRESENT: Ald. Dennis McBride; A. Kesner, City Atty.; Police Chief B. Weber; Acting Fire Chief M. Anton

Ald. Birschel as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM

Administrative policy regarding media relations

Mr. Kesner commented that he distributed the city's policy on media relations because he thought the Council might want to review it. The city's policy is very simple. He stressed that what needs to be remembered here is the relationship of Council to staff. The specific targeting of incidents is usually handled by staff so in that way media relations are an administrative issue. The city has designated the Community Development Director as the spokesperson for emergency operations with one of the City Planners as backup. He noted that there was a lot of talking to the media with the Police Chief, Mayor, City Administrator and Mayfair Management during the recent incident.

Ald. Nikceвич noted that the event at Mayfair was handled very well. She would like to add some recommendations and establish some standard operating procedures. She also thought that the media relations plan should be reviewed every two years. She would like to include the Council president and the district alderpersons when an event happens. She asked about using other technology such as Twitter or Facebook.

Mr. Kesner cautioned that the city doesn't put regular messages on Twitter or Facebook because of open records law. In fact, he has disabled the text messaging ability on city phones because there is no way to save the messages and they can't be archived which is against the law. There is a provision for placing only emergency information that is already on the web site on Twitter by linking to it. That way the message is saved on the web site.

Ald. Roznowski asked how the aldermen get notified. Chief Anton replied that the notification would come through the emergency coordinator. Chief Weber replied that they get notified by cell phone. Chief Anton responded that there are different levels of call lists.

Mr. Kesner stressed that it is difficult to get a message out until the situation becomes clear and the city doesn't have the resources to have a public information center.

Chief Weber advised that there needs to be a chain of command as to who will be notified. In the midst of an incident there may not be enough information for a couple of hours. The media is impatient. When the information is timely it's correct. As Police Chief he is not in the command center and it is important to keep in mind that the commentary on radio and TV is the most difficult to deal with. The city needs to control the information through the chain of command.

Chief Anton stressed that abiding by the city's policy that no information can be given out without clearing it with the fire chief helps to simplify the process of getting information to the public.

Ald. Nikceovich asked if there was a public information officer in the fire department. Chief Anton responded that they have a public information sector. Chief Weber noted that Lt. Witkowski is the spokesperson for the Police Department, but he is given information to disseminate. The police chief's chain of command is the Mayor and then the City Administrator.

Ald. Nikceovich asked if the Mayor was automatically the spokesperson. Mr. Kesner replied that the mayor is the most closely involved with the media and in touch with the police department, the fire department and the City Administrator. Chief Weber cautioned that if a person is designated, they don't always know everything.

Ald. McBride mentioned that he has done public relations and, in his opinion, the Mayfair incident was handled very well. He complimented the Mayor on assuring the public that this was a rare occurrence and Mayfair Mall is the best shopping mall in the area. He thought it would be good for anyone in a spokesperson role to have some public relations training.

Mr. Kesner had a couple of suggestions for questions that need to be addressed: 1) who talks to the media and when; and 2) how is contact made with Council members.

Chief Weber reiterated that Mayfair Mall is a safe place and it is important to reinforce the reality as opposed to the perception.

Ald. McBride suggested putting out some talking points regarding incidents that may happen. The Mayor is the logical choice for being the spokesperson.

Ald. Birschel suggested some training for the elected officials. Mr. Kesner noted that there is training for the new alderpersons every two years; however, they could add a section on public speaking to that.

Ald. Causier observed that looking at the blogs, it seems people were frustrated because they could not have information immediately. She would like to be informed so she can speak to people about whatever is happening in an informed manner.

Ald. McBride mentioned that when the last incident happened a while ago he asked a person in the media to look at other malls in the area for comparable crime incidents.

Ald. Nikceovich requested that the City Administrator create a draft of the revised policy. Mr. Kesner invited committee members to make suggestions and submit them to the City Administrator so that he could present a draft at a future meeting.

Ald. Nikceovich thought there should be a designated spokesperson and not necessarily the Mayor. She would also like more spelled out guidelines. She noted that the media the city was involved with was well done. She felt that there was some criticism of the city's timeliness. She thought that information should be ready to disseminate in two hours and she would like to have prepared statements for specific events.

Ald. Hanson asked if Macys and Boston Store participated in the Parental Guidance Required (PGR) program. Mr. Kesner replied that they do not and can't be made to because they are separate entities apart from the mall in general.

The meeting adjourned at 8:32 PM.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
City of Wauwatosa

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