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February 17, 2009

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on February 17, 2009, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen John Connolly and Rebekah Gewirtz also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Bruce Desmond and Sean O'Donovan, Administrative Assistant Jessie Baker, City Solicitor John Gannon, Chief Fire Engineer Kevin Kelleher, Police Chief Anthony Holloway, Chief Assessor Richard Brescia, Phil Ercolini from SPCD, Environmental Coordinator Vithal Deshpande, and Katie Leonard.

186485 - handling of CRT screens and other computer devices

Mr. Deshpande informed the members that the company that handles these item for the city is very reputable and certified by the EPA. The glass is recycled to another company and the metal and plastic gets recycled in the United States. Mr. Deshpande stated that he is very comfortable with the manner in which the company conducts business. Chairman White asked Mr. Deshpande to check with the EPA to confirm that the company is in compliance with recycling regulations and to ascertain if any complaints have been filed against them. Alderman Desmond asked Mr. Deshpande to contact the EPA to verify that the company is not shipping recyclables overseas. Alderman Connolly asked Mr. Deshpande to check with state and federal regulators to ensure that there aren't any complaints or lawsuits against the company and to report his findings to the committee.

186555 – group homes

186568 - certificates of occupancy

The committee was provided with a list of group homes operating in the city and Chairman White asked if there was any coordination among ISD, the police and fire departments before issuing certificates of occupancy for group homes. Chief Kelleher said that the Fire Department gets involved with the inspection of group homes through the Inspectional Services Department and state regulations. The chief noted, however, that some homes with less than six residents are not required to have a fire sprinkler system installed, since they are exempted under state law.

186749 – incident at the LaQuinta Inn

Chief Holloway spoke about the recent incident at the LaQuinta Inn and told the members that the establishment has changed its rental policy, specifically, rooms will no longer be rented to anyone under 21 years of age and that identification would be required to rent a room, as well. Additionally, closed circuit cameras have been installed in the hotel's hallways. Alderman

Roche stated that he is satisfied with the coordination of the Inn and the Police Department's efforts to prevent future incidents.

186825 – incident in Davis Square

186826 – incident in Davis Square

Chief Holloway spoke about the recent shooting at Diva, in Davis Square. Apparently, a fight between 2 women escalated into a shot being fired into a crowd and the hijacking of a taxi. The person who stole the cab was subsequently arrested. Chief Holloway told the members that club owners do not have to get a permit to host a special event, such as the Hip Hop event on the night of the incident. The chief also stated that the club was not over crowded when the incident ensued. Mr. Gannon told the members that the club's liability is tenuous. Chairman White suggested that the Licensing Commission and the city's Legal Department begin to look at gaps in the city's policies regarding the hosting of special events without a special permit or license being issued. The committee requested that the Police Chief email to all members of the Board of Aldermen, a written summary regarding the February 8, 2009 incident at Diva's.

185821 - bicycle riding on sidewalks outside central business districts

Mr. Gannon told the members that the city currently has regulations in place to regulate this activity and noted that the city has increased the number of bike lanes on its roadways. The regulations may be enforced by the Police Department, however, bicyclists do not have to provide identification to the police, thereby causing an enforcement issue. Mr. Gannon stated that the Administration has to create new regulatory laws to address this. Ms. Baker stated that the Administration is currently working on a plan to encourage bicyclists to ride in the bike and bike friendly lanes. Chairman White requested that the Administration come forward with a comprehensive plan and asked if the Board of Aldermen needed to draft an ordinance to prohibit bicycle riding outside business districts. Ms. Baker was asked to provide a response to the committee within one month.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman William A. White, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Public Health and Public Safety