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March 8, 2010

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
ON PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SAFETY

The Committee on Public Health and Public Safety convened on March 8, 2010, with Chairman William White presiding and Committee Members Aldermen Rebekah Gewirtz and John Connolly also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Bruce Desmond, Sean O'Donovan and Robert Trane, Police Chief Michael Cabral, Executive Director of OSPCD Monica Lamboy, Superintendent of Inspectional Services Ed Nuzzo and interested members of the public.

188788 - crime(s) committed at 66 Hinckley Street:

Chief Cabral presented crime data in the area over the past 12 years and said that in 2009, the crime rose 5%. There have not been many home break-ins and there were a total of 7 arrests, 3 of which were for drug related offenses. Chief Cabral explained that when an incident occurs, a patrolman takes the initial report and that detectives are assigned if a follow-up is warranted. Chief Cabral has directed officers to list directed patrols on Hinckley Street so that there is a record of them.

188711 – removal of vehicle from Richardson Terrace:

Chief Fire Engineer Kevin Kelleher submitted to the committee on February 2nd stating that the vehicle has been removed.

188716 - trespassing at the Maxpak site:

Chief Cabral and Ms. Lamboy addressed the safety concerns at this property. Representatives from the developer, KSS, met with city officials and committed to 5 key points to ensure that the site remains safe and secure. Additionally, KSS will periodically cut/remove the underbrush and weeds to maintain visibility across the property. The Police Department has increased the directed patrols of the area, including the bike path, and anyone found to be trespassing will be arrested. Neighbors told the committee that these improvements have helped to quiet the area down. Chairman White requested that Ms. Lamboy inform the committee and the ward alderman before any new construction begins and that the committee also be apprised of the safety measures to be taken when the slab is removed from the site. Neighbors asked that KSS email them with updates on the project or that a website be established where residents could find update information.

188165 & 188446 – Tufts University off campus alcohol use:

Chief Cabral was asked to examine problems related to noise and off campus alcohol use by Tufts students and how the university's new policy will affect Somerville neighborhoods. Chief Cabral will provide the committee with a summary of complaints received since Labor Day.

188099 & 188787 - trash violation issues:

The committee discussed issues regarding citations issued for trash violations and Ms. Lamboy stated that over the past few years, commercial trash has decreased significantly. In 2009, there was an increase in citations issued for residential properties with the highest numbers being seen in Ward 1 and the lowest in Wards 6 and 7. Currently, the city used the Unix system when issuing citations, however OSPCD would like to change to another system that would provide real time data and allow for the timely mailing of violation notices to property owners. The addresses of property owners are obtained from the city's assessing database, however, OSPCD cross references those addresses with the list maintained by the Water Department. With respect to violations at condominiums, a lien may be sought against the condo association for failure to pay fines. Both Aldermen O'Donovan and Trane expressed concern that even though the citations are valid, they are sometimes sent to the wrong address, thereby depriving the property owner of the due process to appeal the citation. The committee asked that the Law Department provide additional information on this issue as it relates to condominiums.

Other business:

Chairman White asked that representatives be present at the committee's March 20th meeting to address item 188719, regarding pedestrian crosswalk signs.

No items were acted on.

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