POLICE ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 19, 2012
TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
6:00 – 7:30 P.M.
MINUTES

Attendees
Bob Cohen
Bruce Delaney
Norb Dunkel
Juanita Miles-Hamilton
Jaquie Resnick
Albert White
Rosa Williams

Absent
None

1) Call to Order – Chair Bruce Delaney
The meeting was called to order at 6:10 P.M.

2) Approval of February 16, 2012 Meeting Minutes
The minutes were approved as submitted by a unanimous vote of 7-0.

3) Approval of Future Meeting Locations
The Council approved the locations as submitted by Staff Liaison Osborne.

4) Discussion of Neighborhood Concerns

The Security Chair from Turkey Creek Forest Neighborhood Watch and another member were in attendance. Their Group tries to take care of problems as they arise and if they can’t, they call GPD. Their community has a guard at the gate from 9:00 P.M. to 5:00 A.M. each night. Their biggest problem is solicitors. GPD Captain Ed Posey suggested they write letters to the specific companies who are continuing offenders and tell them they are not to trespass on the property and send a copy to GPD so they can enforce the wishes of the community.

Wes Wheeler and his wife live in the NW and had a recent burglary of their home. They were unhappy with GPD’s handling of the incident and Mr. Wheeler emailed complaints to the Council prior to the meeting for their review. Member Dunkel asked Mr. Wheeler to put the emotions of the incident aside and pinpoint what he thought were the specific problems with the way GPD handled his case. Mr. Wheeler’s specifics are:

1) The victim should be more involved.
2) The detective assigned to the case did not return phone calls.
3) Dispatch personnel were not knowledgeable on who to contact with follow-up information.
4) Communication.
5) Participation.
6) GPD needs to teach victims how they can help.
7) Felt he and his wife were not important.
8) Officers lacked sensitivity about their home and possessions.
9) The original Crime Scene Tech was uncommunicative and messy.
10) GPD refused to let a family friend in the house with his wife, even though Mr. Wheeler was out of town and asked the friend to go to his house to help his wife.

Member White commented that another level of an investigation is the State Attorney’s Office, which does not take the victim nor GPD into consideration when deciding on the sentencing recommendations for suspects. He also suggested the Chief may need in-service training for the officers on what information can be shared with victims.

Chair Delaney stated that when police arrive at a victim’s home why not make it a more acceptable, better interaction. His neighborhood had several burglaries in recent months, even though some police officers live in the neighborhood. The people there maintain their homes and many have lived there twenty five years or more. When burglaries are committed it has an impact on the entire neighborhood and residents start wanting to move out.

Member Resnick wanted to follow up on some of Mr. Wheeler’s suggestions: When a woman is home alone, why couldn’t a friend stay or a victim advocate called? Chief Jones stated often if a second person shows up at a crime scene that hasn’t been processed, it could contaminate the scene. Evidence is what it takes to link a suspect to a crime scene. However, he can see that as an emotional impact the friend should be encouraged to be with the victim. He takes burglaries seriously and encouraged the PAC members to attend one of his weekly Tactical Briefings where he and his Command Staff discuss specific crimes in specific areas. There are three Crime Prevention Officers assigned to the districts, plus officers on shift can offer crime prevention tip to victims. Member Resnick asked if a list of resources is provided to the victims, as was the case several years ago when her home was burglarized. She said it was a good resource and explained how soon a victim can expect someone to come out and what other things they can expect – perhaps five or six Frequently Asked Questions cold be give out at the scene and put on GPD’s website. Chief Jones said GPD had such a pamphlet in place, but much of the information is outdated. He will work with staff to have that updated and present a draft at the next meeting.

Lieutenant Will Halvosa from GPD Criminal Investigations Bureau spoke on how cases were assigned and that it usually takes several days for a case to be assigned to a detective after an incident. Cases are assigned if there is evidence they think will help solve the case, such as fingerprints. After Mr. Wheeler’s complaints were received, it was determined there were some areas that Detectives could improve communications with victims and is working on making those changes. Some things cannot change. Last year CIB received 7,200 cases and they only have one Victim Advocate. They send that VA out to the more serious cases such as Armed Robberies and Sexual Assaults. One thing they have added to their voice mail is their sergeant’s name and phone number in the event the detective cannot be reached. Lieutenant Halvosa also gave a brief summary how case reports are processed through the system from the time of the call until they are received in Detectives.

Member Williams said that not returning phone calls is a real problem. Member Resnick suggested putting additional information on the voicemails, such as vacations, training days, etc. It would let the victim know the detective is out, instead of their voicemail being ignored and they not know why.
Member Cohen asked how long it takes to get fingerprints through the system that are taken at crime scene. Lieutenant Halvosa said if they have a suspect it only takes one or one and a half days, but if they are just running the prints without a suspect it can take weeks. Mr. Cohen asked if the big picture was a lack of resources question; how understaffed is GPD? Chief Jones responded that he has hired a firm to come in to GPD to do a staffing study. He thought it was important to have an outside, unbiased group do the study so there could be no question of the validity of the study. The study results will come back sometime in August. In the study the Chief will ask for not only about the staffing levels but if we deploy our troops in the most effective way. Captain Posey commented the study may also come back with suggestions on some types of cases we should not be investigating.

Chair Delaney stressed that the first impression with victims is important. The stakeholders are the citizens. Perhaps focus groups would help. Chief Jones stated he saw the need for more officer training and GPD Conflict Resolution Specialist Dr. Patricia Grunder has been doing training with all Operations officers on communication and customer service.

The Crime Watch Chair of Springtree Subdivision is also concerned with communication with GPD. Neighborhood Watches are trying to help the police and communication is difficult. He understands that the Sheriff’s Department Combined Communications Center is part of the problem. The CCC operators don’t always know how to help with contact for the officers. He would like to see an easier way to get to officers for follow-up questions. He suggests a social event for the zone officers to meet the citizens in each zone.

Member Cohen asked if the PAC will be given a copy of the staffing study when it is completed. Chief Jones will give the PAC the information first, before it goes public. The study should be complete this summer, but will not be made public until August. The City Manager does not want the study published in the middle of the City’s budget process, as it may cause confusion or problems. Mr. Cohen stated that he thinks it is part of PAC’s appointment to advocate for citizens, but also GPD. The Council is to remind the City Manager and City Commission that the PAC is looking at operations and procedures at GPD.

Member Miles-Hamilton agrees that communication is important. She is glad to hear about the staffing study.

Mr. Wheeler feels that changes need to be made. It would help if the zone officers know who the detective is for their zone. It is also a problem that detectives do not have department issued cell phones to make contact with them easier. Chief Jones stated this issue is now being discussed during contract bargaining with the police unions; it is a budget issue. He would like for all officers and detectives to have City issued cell phones to make communication with them easier.

5) **Public Comment**
There was no additional public comment.

5) **Member Comment**
None.
6) **Next Meeting Date**  
The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 11 at a time and location to be given by the Lincoln Estates Neighborhood Watch Chair.

7) **Adjournment**  
The meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.