



**CITY OF SCOTTSDALE
NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 2023

**COMMUNITY DESIGN STUDIO - NAVE
7506 EAST INDIAN SCHOOL ROAD
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZONA 85251**

PRESENT: Jonathan Budwig, Vice Chair
Larry Hewitt, Vice Chair
Nancy Doty Brady, Commissioner
William James, Commissioner
Louise Lamb, Commissioner
Bridget Schwartz-Manock, Commissioner (arrived at 5:07 p.m.)
Richard Siegel, Commissioner

STAFF: Tom Shannon, Scottsdale Fire Chief
Kerry Swick, Scottsdale Fire Department
Reese Miller, Human Services Representative
Mike Lopach, Human Services Manager
Adam Yaron, Commission Liaison
Taylor Reynolds, Project Coordination Liaison
Greg Bestgen, Human Services Department

Call to Order/Roll Call

The meeting of the Neighborhood Advisory Commission was called to order at 5:01 p.m. A formal roll call was conducted, confirming members present as stated above.

Public Comment

No comments were submitted.

1. Approve Draft Summary Meeting Minutes February 22, 2022

Chair James called for comments/corrections. There were no corrections.

COMMISSIONER SIEGEL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 22, 2022 MEETING AS PRESENTED. VICE CHAIR HEWITT SECONDED THE MOTION, WHICH CARRIED FIVE (5) TO ZERO (0) WITH VICE CHAIR BUDWIG, VICE CHAIR HEWITT AND COMMISSIONERS JAMES, LAMB AND SIEGEL VOTING IN THE AFFIRMATIVE WITH NO DISSIDENTING VOTES. COMMISSIONER DOTY BRADY ABSTAINED. COMMISSIONER SCHWARTZ-MANOCK WAS NOT YET PRESENT.

2. Scottsdale Fire: Public Safety Education & Awareness Programming

Adam Yaron, Commission Liaison, noted that no public comments have been received for this agenda item.

Commissioner Schwartz-Manock arrived at 5:07 p.m.

Tom Shannon, Scottsdale Fire Chief, provided a brief history of the department, which began in 2005. For 50 years prior to that time, the City had been served by Rural Metro. Because Rural Metro had a profit business model, over time it became evident that the contract could not be maintained. Negotiations took place in 2003 to transition to a municipal department, with Scottsdale Fire Department being established in July of 2005. The department consists of over 300 employees, with expansion to 400 employees likely over the next few years. An overview of services and department responsibilities was provided. An overriding department goal is to be able to reach patients and those in need of emergency services within six minutes. This goal provides the basis and guidelines for the placement of emergency fire stations throughout the City.

The growth of the department is being managed through bond projects and strategic planning to include:

- Addition of Fire Station 612
- Fire Training Facility
- Equipment Replacement
- Fire Utility Truck standard equipment models

One of the most significant challenges facing the department are the numerous impending personnel retirements. This anticipated loss of highly skilled employees needs to be addressed prior to their departure. It is essential that the incumbent workforce be given the opportunity to obtain as many new work skills as possible. Recruitment retention and resiliency is also critical. Over the course of the upcoming surge of retirements, 14 of the 19 chief officers are expected to depart. In addition, 49 of 69 captains will be eligible to retire, 41 of 69 engineers will be eligible to retire and 80 paramedics will be eligible to retire. It will be critical to train and bring on staff in order to prevent gaps in service delivery as these waves of retirements occur. The challenge is the need to create a sense of urgency without the element of panic. It is important to hear from the Neighborhood Advisory Commission and other commissions regarding expectations on continued delivery of services.

Commissioner Lamb inquired about the success of the Home Safe program. Chief Shannon described it as very successful. Because home falls represent the department's biggest call for service, investment in the program remains strong. There was an increase in these types of calls for service during the pandemic.

Commissioner James inquired about incentives for personnel to remain past their initial retirement eligibility period. Chief Shannon stated that there are no established incentives to retain new employees outside of the pension system. For those inside the pension system and as the employee goes past the required 20 years, they will receive a percentage increase of annual take-home pay up to the 32nd year, after which time the amount is capped. Employees may also separate from the pension system and enter a deferred retirement option program for a five-year period. Unfortunately, this option is neither beneficial to the pension or the underlying problem, as the individual stops contributing to the pension, while remaining at risk of injury. The only benefit is that there becomes date certain departure that can be incorporated into planning. Most of the challenges for those leaving employment is the cost of health care. Addressing the time gap between retirement and Medicare eligibility is an important focus. Bringing employees back to employment post-contract is an option, however, this presents challenges with vulnerability for retirement-aged employees, both medically and physically.

Commissioner James suggested allowing post-contract employees to return and take positions of a less physically challenging nature. Chief Shannon confirmed that this is a focus, where possible. The concern is that the pace of departures may not match the readiness of existing and incoming staff.

In response to a question from Commissioner James, Chief Shannon confirmed that the ability to live in the City of Scottsdale is a challenging housing issue from a financial perspective for many fire employees. This is unfortunate, as connection to community and sense of ownership is an important factor to the success of the department.

Commissioner Doty Brady asked about the qualifications required to be hired by the department. Chief Shannon reviewed the qualifications, including high school graduate, valid drivers license, and state certified in Emergency Medical Technology (EMT). EMT certification is not required at the time of application. The department will be conducting a significant recruitment in the coming weeks.

Commissioner Doty Brady inquired as to recognition of military qualifications. Chief Shannon confirmed that the department has been working with the State to smooth the reciprocity process for military veterans with medical experience. In addition, preference points are given to veteran applicants.

In response to question from Vice Chair Hewitt, Chief Shannon confirmed that the department does out of state recruitment for employees.

Schwartz-Manock inquired about availability of funds for staffing. Chief Shannon commented that no City department has the funds necessary to provide the quality off services that citizens deserve.

In response to a question from Commissioner Lamb, Chief Shannon stated that most candidate cadets successfully complete the training program. However, while Scottsdale's training program is very successful, many of the cadets accept positions in other cities.

3. Scottsdale's Operation Fix It Program

Mr. Yaron noted that no public comments have been received for this agenda item.

Mike Lopach, Human Services Manager, stated that the program has moved from Code Enforcement to the Human Services Department at the beginning of this year. He provided a brief background of the program, which is funded primarily through in-kind and monetary donations, grants, and modest general funding. The program's main intent is to assist income-eligible members of the community in maintaining landscaping and addressing blighted property conditions. The program was formally established as Operation Fix It in 2012, but was active prior to that under different names and in different departments going back to the late 1990s. The program experienced a funding infusion via monies available through the CARES Act, which enabled the engagement of a number of vendors to contract the work. At the same time, the number of volunteers was reduced, due to restrictions at the time of the pandemic. The infusion of funds gave the impression to the community that there was funding available to continue to complete projects, however, those funds have since been expended. It became necessary to scale back expectations in terms of scope and type of work that could be performed.

A significant program challenge is weed control. After an atypical season of atmospheric rivers, the weed growth is astronomical. A majority of referrals at this time are due to weeds. State regulations current limit the use of weed sprays. Only those who have been through training process are able to utilize the sprays and they may only do so on City property or on property for which the City has a contract. They are currently going through a process that may allow a change in designation to allow spraying.

Mr. Lopach noted that program recipients face income challenges and mobility issues. They typically are without family support and may be socially isolated. Now that the program is under the umbrella of the Human Services Department, it will be easier to connect these individuals with available support resources. It is important going forward that the program reestablish its volunteer base.

The Welcome Home initiative is a faith-based program formed during the pandemic to assist in the prevention of evictions for those in need. On April 20th, staff is meeting with the Welcome Home Committee to discuss the potential for these faith-based organizations to participate by providing services formally or informally. Neighbors Helping Neighbors is another organization that the Department hopes to engage with. Operation Fix It also benefits from the services of a full-time volunteer, who is working to submit funding grant applications. Since the program has come under Human Services, the department has received 25 referrals and has completed ten projects. Currently seven to ten applications are pending.

In response to a question from Commissioner Lamb, Mr. Lopach stated that he would look into the capacity and/or feasibility of participation in the program by Block Watch members. The department does offer tools for lending to Block Watch and neighborhood groups for neighborhood cleanups.

Commissioner Lamb inquired about the previous program of a City provided dumpster being present in a neighborhood for a limited time, with free use as needed. Mr. Lamb stated that such a program exists from the Office of Citizen Service.

Commissioner James asked about the criteria used to determine which projects will be completed. Mr. Lopach stated that it always begins with eligibility. Other factors include whether the conditions involve a code issue that may lead to an abatement for the home owner. Other considerations involve health and safety issues for the resident.

In response to a question from Commissioner Doty Brady, Mr. Lopach stated that there is no requirement for volunteers to have liability insurance, however, some volunteer groups do carry their own liability insurance policies. Mr. Yaron added that the City has a volunteer coordinator, who utilizes methodologies working with the risk department to obtain waivers from volunteers in advance of participation.

4. Identification of Future Agenda Items

Commissioner James requested an update on the current state of homelessness and accompanying programs and initiatives in the City.

5. Staff Updates

Mr. Yaron reported on the Spirit Award recipient presentation to City Council on March 21, 2023.

The next meeting Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday April 26, 2023.

6. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, being duly moved by Commissioner Lamb and seconded by Commissioner Doty Brady, the meeting adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

AYES: Chair Budwig, Vice Chair Hewitt, Commissioners Dody Brady, Hewitt, James, Lamb, Schwartz-Manock and Siegel.

NAYS: None

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