



Meeting Location
DeKalb Municipal Building
Executive Conference Room – 2nd Floor
200 S. Fourth Street
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Minutes

**Annie Glidden North Task Force
Neighborhood Safety and Security Subcommittee Meeting
February 15, 2018
8:00 a.m.**

The Annie Glidden North Task Force Neighborhood Safety and Security Subcommittee Meeting held a meeting on Thursday, February 15, 2018 at City Hall in the Executive Conference Room.

Before the meeting was called to order, Management Analyst Ray Munch introduced himself and explained that additional staff is being pulled into the subcommittees to support their work. He introduced Management Analyst Emily Tipps, staff liaison, and her responsibilities.

The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m.

A. Roll Call

The following committee members were present: Will Heinisch, Christie Krupp, Mohammad Labadi, Michael Newman, and Mike Pittsley.

Staff present included Management Analyst Tipps, Management Analyst Munch, and Diana Robinson of NIU Center for Governmental Studies.

B. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved following a discussion regarding whether the committee's focus should be the entire city or limited to the AGN area. The concern was that implementing enhanced safety measures in AGN might push crime to other parts of the city, and so a citywide focus is needed to prevent new problems in other neighborhoods.

It was agreed that the discussion would be sensitive to that possibility but that it was inappropriate for the committee to change the focus of the project. However, strategies that are implemented in the AGN area and prove effective could be used in other areas of the city.

Heinisch moved to approve the agenda. Pittsley seconded. Motion approved.

C. Public Participation

None at this point. Two members of the public were present: Dave Grant and Brian Morsch. Task Force member Chad Glover also attended, but did not participate.

D. Items for Discussion/Action

1. Desired outcomes related to safety and security in the Annie Glidden North neighborhood.

Camiros will provide the initial plan that will go to City Council for approval. They've asked for certain things to be accomplished that are outlined in the "Desired Outcomes" document shared with the committee. The open-ended questions were provided by Camiros. Pittsley asked if the committee needed to follow the Camiros outline. Munch suggested that folks tie comments to outline wherever possible.

Munch asked if any of the committee members would be willing to facilitate. Krupp offered to lead the discussion. She said that she had shared the Camiros questions with the Barb City Action Initiative and offered to share her feedback.

Krupp had reviewed the advance materials and observed that the number of certain types of violent crime, such as student muggings, aggravated battery, and home invasion went down in 2017 but that weapons offenses and calls to police went up. They peaked last year in February – April and declined in May and through the summer, suggesting a relationship to the school year. Domestic violence was identified as a topic that should be included in the discussion.

Labadi said that 20 years ago he was able to walk DeKalb streets at night and feel safe. He would like to bring that feeling back. What else can we do, particularly with regard to people coming into the city from outside DeKalb? One possibility was requiring cameras in many places that represent potential security problems, such as bars, lounges, and large residential complexes. If people know they're being watched they're more likely to think twice before breaking the law.

Creating job programs for people was another idea that was raised. If people have no other way to feed their family, they are more likely to turn to crime. We need to put these local people to work with employers who are bringing in workers from other cities.



Pittsley also supported the idea of cameras as they have helped solve crimes. He thought that the biggest problem is a lack of follow-through from the City to monitor DeKalb's neighborhoods to see, for example, whether lights are out or trees need trimming. Other cities have Neighborhood and Building Services departments that are in charge of this.

Newman said that there was also violence in DeKalb 20 years ago. The question for him is what is causing the crime? Is it large concentrations of unemployed people? If so, there are programs that offer job-related training. The key is connecting people to good employment, not just a job that pays minimum wage. Employers are often not offering employment that can sustain a family. Poor people making minimum wage have to make difficult economic decisions. If they are offered a job that pays more than minimum wage they may lose important benefits. Minimum wage changes the dynamics of people in DeKalb. In order to make an impactful change, we need to identify what causes crime.

Pittsley said that the AGN area was not designed for people with jobs or families. This has given rise to an overabundant stock of housing.

Newman said that the criminals don't necessarily live in the area. It's not a pattern of constant activity. Rather, gang members come into DeKalb, commit crimes, and leave. How do we help people who need employment and housing?

Krupp said that our job in the short-term is to identify some quick fixes. We need safe routes, cameras, and lights, all of which will help increase enrollments. Cameras and lights are one thing on which the committee agrees.

Munch said that the focus of this committee is safety and security. Other committees are addressing other community needs.

Newman responded that it all plays a role in safety and security. We need to identify what makes DeKalb unsafe. We need to identify where the crime is occurring.

Pittsley said that the City doesn't have enough resources to cover all of DeKalb. We need property owners to help. He proposed a camera system.

Krupp asked whether there has been a proposal that requiring that buildings with more than x number of units are required to have cameras. Dave Grant said that wouldn't work because property owners will purchase the cheapest system.



Labadi said that one possible solution is to propose an ordinance. Krupp said she will be speaking with Dean Frieders about why an ordinance has not yet been proposed.

Krupp suggested that a community fund-raising effort be undertaken to create a pass-through fund to support public safety activities. Such an effort would need an administrative agent and would need to be presented in a way that encouraged people to contribute. For example, funding moveable cameras that could be relocated if crime moved to other areas. She also suggested that neighborhood watches be formed.

Pittsley offered his list of improvement activities:

- City departments take on neighborhood monitoring responsibilities.
- Develop better communication between property owners, City government, tenants, and NIU regarding safety and community events.
- Neighborhood policing.
- Environmental design.
- Public safety and security cameras and requiring property owners to register their cameras with the City.
- Better street lighting.
- Property maintenance.

Pittsley also noted that students' ability to have fun is being curtailed because of security concerns. NIU needs to provide procedures that will allow student parties to be held off campus but have basic safety requirements in place such as monitors and set times.

DeKalb's Safe Streets Initiative was mentioned as a positive development. It eliminates overnight parking for nonresidents of the City. Neighborhood support of this is already happening.

Labadi suggested that a representative of DeKalb's Crime Free Housing Program be added to this group. This program uses property owner training, environmental design, and resident crime prevention meetings to certify that a property has met minimum security requirements for residents' safety.

Krupp said that residents do not understand the chain of command to alert the City to problems. Do we want a tree of command? Perhaps include that information in a welcome basket to new residents?

Heinisch suggested that another option is to create a network of neighborhood associations, like the ones in Rockford, that offer a permanent structure sustained from year to year. These associations involve the City, churches, and businesses and meet quarterly to share important information. This information should also be posted on the City of DeKalb's website so it becomes a one-stop shop for residents. It can be used to report safety issues, publicize community activities, and promote employment



opportunities. It can empower residents to be the eyes and ears of their neighborhoods.

Newman said that the County's Health Department has case managers for people in the community who might be able to help with this. We don't know what percentage of offenders live in DeKalb or outside of the city. If it's the latter, do we need to increase enforcement of minor infractions consistent with the Broken Windows strategy? Police would crack down on tinted car windows, unfastened seat belts, and talking on cell phones to encourage would-be criminals to avoid DeKalb.

Several software applications were discussed as potential aids for providing residents with useful real-time information on their mobile phones. The DeKalb Wellness Security App connects people to resources including NIU and community contacts. Alert DeKalb provides two-way communication and users can text a tip directly to telecommunicators. It went live last May and is now ramping up. Mobile Patrol provides hourly updates, but it wasn't clear whether the data came from court records. If the site could include incident reports where safety concerns were involved it could be very useful. Several committee members suggested that NIU expand its networks and send out community notifications to all students via an email blast.

Newman said that 211 is an underused resource and can help connect residents to social programs in DeKalb. This service is managed through United Way.

Newman was asked to describe the services that Hope Haven, located in the northwest portion of the AGN neighborhood, provides. He explained that it is a 90-day program for homeless individuals who have been in DeKalb for at least one year. They provide social services, life skills development, and a case manager. Psychiatric services are provided on-site and appointments may be made with Ben Gordon. They have installed nine cameras outside and inside the facility. Hope Haven also offers more than 40 units of permanent housing. Newman offered a tour to any interested committee members.

Dave Grant appreciated Newman's insights and the importance of distinguishing between people who need help and bad people. He has been working on a camera system consisting of a video recorder hooked to Wi-Fi for several years. It has cost him \$30,000 to install his 25-camera system on three sites. Labadi's system is much less expensive suggesting that additional research is needed to determine the most cost-effective approach.

Newman pointed out that the people we hope to catch come from a place of cameras and that they are not a deterrent for people who commit crimes. Cameras are more for our comfort and are not the answer to all of DeKalb's



safety and security problems. Labadi said that cameras also make pedestrians feel safer.

Krupp asked the committee to think about how to market these approaches to the community. A Shots Fired System is likely too expensive for citywide installation.

Newman suggested that NIU could help drive funding for that. Brian Morsch suggested selling a house purchased by the City for a police officer to live in as a crime-fighting effort as a revenue source.

Another suggestion was for NIU to purchase substandard buildings and redevelop them or install kiosks with safety buttons. Less expensive cameras are also available, and while they may not hold up in bad weather, may be an option for homeowners and small property owners.

The possibility of taxing a neighborhood through a Special Service Area assessment was mentioned but would require a feasibility analysis before pursuing. Fines for gun-related offenses could be increased, although this might have disproportionately affect poor defendants.

Krupp will report on this at the next meeting. These fines may be prosecuted by the County, though.

E. Adjournment

Krupp moved to adjourn the meeting, Newman seconded. Adjourned at 9:39 a.m.

Approved by the Neighborhood Safety and Security Subcommittee: March 08, 2018

