



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
Monday, April 7, 2014**

The Public Safety Commission convened in a regular meeting on Monday, April 7, 2014 at City Hall, 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair Kim Rossmo, called the Board Meeting to order at 4:10 PM.

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Kim Rossmo  
Mike Levy  
Michael Lauderdale  
Reynaldo Moreno  
Ramey Ko (arrived 4:32pm)  
Kent Anschutz

**Board Members not in Attendance:**

Sam Holt

**1. Approval of Minutes**

- The minutes for the regular meeting on 3/3/2014 were approved on Commissioner Kent Anschutz's motion, Commissioner Reynaldo Moreno's second and a 5-0 unanimous vote.

**2. Citizen Communications**

- **Mr. Walter Lawson (not a citizen of Austin)** – Early Detection Systems on Wildfire – Chair Rossmo asked Mr. Lawson if he was a vendor and advised that the Commission does not receive input from vendors. Chair Rossmo stated that Mr. Lawson could speak, but the Commission does not make recommendations in that regards.
- **Mr. Gus Pena** – Austin needs more officers because we are growing larger. We need officers in the outer layers of Austin not just downtown.

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**3. Discussion and Possible Action Items****a. *Suspended Driving Recommendation – Public Safety Commission***

1. Chair Rossmo is making the Suspended Driving Recommendation based on reports the Commission received on traffic fatalities. Chair Rossmo read the proposed recommendation. The recommendation was approved on Chair Rossmo's motion, Vice Chair Levy's second and a 5-0 vote.

**b. *Downtown Issues*****1. *South by Southwest (SXSW) – General Overview of Council Resolution – Austin Police Department***

- Chief of Staff Harry Evans spoke about a Council Resolution passed in March 2014 directing the City Manager to conduct a full post-event evaluation of all events taking place during SXSW with respect to the following: traffic management, public safety deployment and permitting, event sprawl and potential impact on residential areas, coordination with existing venues, stakeholder feedback, etc. The report is due in 90 days. Chief Evans is bringing this to the Commission's attention because the report is much more than the Public Safety piece of it and APD, EMS, and AFD with work on their individual piece of the report for the next 90 days. Chief Evans suggests that as Public Safety prepares their report to address the resolution they also address the pending Special Events agenda item.
- Chair Rossmo asked that this be marked tentatively for the July Public Safety Commission meeting.
- Vice Chair Levy suggests that the Commission recommend to the Council that we focus on all events large and small and not just to SXSW. Chief Manley stated that the resolution is for SXSW at this time and cannot be changed.
- Chair Rossmo stated that he wants the Commission to provide input for additional things within the scope of this resolution that the Commission believes should be added. The Commission has repeatedly brought up the issue that the Special Events are being funded indirectly through tax dollars as opposed to the businesses that are making money from them. The Commission has suggested strongly in the past that there should be a direct linear relationship between the cost of providing public safety for SXSW and the fees people pay. It should not come out of monies from the General Fund or from property taxes or anything else from the city. He feels this is one issue he would like to further explore; he would like to know the specific numbers. How much did this cost the citizens of Austin; as opposed to the people making money from SXSW?
- Chair Rossmo's second issue to address is the belief that growth is good and he thinks that belief should be challenged. He doesn't believe that it is necessarily an accurate assumption. Things can grow to be too big, too problematic. What is the impact on downtown? The conflicting requirements that downtown be a place of business, a place of play, and a place of

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residence are sometimes not sorted out. He also believes that the Commission needs to explore the impact of these Special Events on the livability. We also need to consider if the Public Safety agencies have the necessary resources to handle these special events. Are the Public Safety agencies getting funding for them? Are the events impacting the delivery of service to other parts of the city? He doesn't want to see the safety or the resource response go down because of special events.

- Vice Chair Levy – agrees with Chair Rossmo on the non-quantitative factors in terms of cost. According to Vice Chair Levy, Police Chief Art Acevedo stated to him in a discussion earlier today that for special events like SXSW, it is all hands on deck. He takes out of their normal responsibilities; District Representatives, task squads and Detectives to work these large events. Chief Manley confirmed that was correct information; APD reassigns personnel from across the department and the units that Vice Chair Levy just mentioned are included in that reassignment. Vice Chair Levy - On a non-quantitative basis the neighborhoods and citizens outside of the downtown area do pay a degree of the price of the event because they do not have the same law enforcement support coverage that they otherwise would have. VC Levy asked Chief Manley if that was a safe statement. Chief Manley stated; it is correct to say that APD reassigns personnel from across the city to this event (SXSW) thereby leaving fewer resources that would have been in other parts of the city. Additionally, APD pulls detectives from their regular assignments (caseloads) to work these large events. Some patrol officers are called in; however, APD relies heavily on outside units such as; District Representatives, Metro-Tactical Units, and the Investigative Units.
- Chair Rossmo – Stated, so it is fair to say that we are seeing a reduction in services in both, investigative, patrol, and support services during these events. So, what the Commission does not understand is why someone who going to be making money from an event like SXSW is not paying for policing at overtime rates to provide the support they need. Why are we supporting them? He asks that APD explore these questions in the report to Council, he recommends that there be a direct relationship between the use of resources and the payment of those resources (which probably means at overtime rates).
- Commissioner Michael Lauderdale – What are some of the impacts psychologically of being assigned to the large events like SXSW? Chief Manley – Commissioner Lauderdale's concern is whether a short-term assignment to a special event of a week long duration is going to change their overall psychological performance on the job. Chief Manley also asked Commissioner Lauderdale if he wants this to be part of the report to Council in 90 days. Commissioner Lauderdale confirmed that yes the Commission wants it to be part of the report.
- Commissioner Moreno – asked if AFD and EMS if they use the same approach that APD uses for staffing during events like SXSW. Chief Evans

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responded that AFD will look at those same issues in regards to inspecting venues, call response, etc. AFD will also look at the intensity for our downtown crews because of the call volume and the type of the demographic of the people AFD is running calls on. Commissioner Lauderdale – Clarified Commissioner Moreno’s question to AFD and EMS: Do you allocate your resources like APD does so that there is less fire protection or less EMS services in my neighborhood because those resources are deployed downtown? Chief Evans – AFD’s pressure during these events primarily has to do with the permitting of all the events, the inspection of the events, and then the fire watch that would go on while the events are happening. Chief Shamard – From an EMS standpoint, we do not have fewer units in the community we have the same number of units, but similar to police and fire EMS staffs the extra resources they put downtown either by overtime or by people working in lieu of other staff positions. They are staffing motorcycles, carts, and ambulances dedicated to downtown.

- Chair Rossmo – final suggestion: perhaps there can be an exploration of if the character and nature of SXSW is changing, it may be wise to come up with a state of purpose of what SXSW is supposed to do and what it’s supposed to be. So, if it’s supposed to be a place for music, technology, movies, art, etc., great; however, the concern starts is that it starts to devolve into a party (with events offering free alcohol), everything clustered into the downtown area as opposed to being spread out. In other words, it starts to take on a life of its own, growing in directions that is not compatible with what the City and citizens would like it to be and ends up being a huge problem that eventually gets canceled.
- Commissioner Ko – Keep in mind, we have a lot of demand on our resources, we need more resources. This is one of the few times we can make a recommendation to Council that’s not just we need more resources, but here are sources of revenue that the Council might want to consider as being beneficial. Council knows we need more officers, firefighters and medics, but they want to know where the money will come from to fund these more positions. This is the opportunity to show Council that there is a lot of potential sources of revenue that is appropriate to look at because they are directly related to these costs we are having put out for public safety.
- Vice Chair Levy – Are there different types of challenges between ROT Rally and Special Events? APD and EMS both responded that each event has unique challenges.
- Commissioner Ko – To follow on Vice Chair Levy’s point, is there a critical mass at which point you see a considerable difference in what you have to do? Is there a size of an event under which does not affect your day to day operations much at all? Or is there a size over which there is definitely a big effect? What is the qualitative analysis of where the lines tend to be or where you see big jumps in needs based on number is size and duration of the event.

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- Commissioner Ko – Another challenge we need to consider with SXSW, is all the independent “unofficial” events that are starting to happen at the same time as the official events. Take into consideration that these types of things can multiply and metastasize if we do not have a good plan for it.
- Vice Chair Levy – Asked if these “unofficial” events impact AFD and Chief Evans stated that it is a challenge for AFD.

## **2. Downtown Area Command (DAC) –**

### **• Crime Problems – Assistant Chief Steve Deaton and Officer Troy Officer, Austin Police Department**

- AC Steve Deaton provided a PowerPoint presentation explaining the geographic area of GEORGE (radio call sign for downtown area command). Explained GEORGE geographic boundaries, covers from the river all the way north to 12<sup>th</sup> street, western boundary is Lamar, eastern boundary is Chicon. GEORGE is the smallest geographic area in the city in the way they breakdown the districts, it has the largest most dense population for its small geographic size.
- Chair Rossmo – can you explain the map provided in the PowerPoint.
- Officer Troy Officer - DANA – Downtown Neighborhood Association, PID – Public Improvement District, Pecan Street.
- AC Deaton – GEORGE area - 10,623 full time residents living, 6500 hotel rooms, 2 -5000 transients living in the downtown area. A large amount of people congregated in a small area on a daily basis. In the last 5-6 years the entertainment district has grown.
- Vice Chair Levy – 5-10 years ago we did not have the large residential area downtown. The new residential area brings on different sets of challenges.
- Chair Rossmo – asked AC Deaton his opinion of level of cooperation APD receives from the business owners in the downtown area in regards to over service of alcohol, management of patrons. AC Deaton - APD meets on a regular basis with downtown business owners and nightclub owners and the level of cooperation is fantastic.

### **• Drug Arrests – Austin Police Department**

- AC Deaton – Counter-Drug Operations – Narcotic sting in May 2013, focused on dealers and buyers. Came up with 70 warrants for possession of a controlled substance and 50 individuals who had charges filed against them. The 50 individuals have collectively over 3,200 encounters a very large consumer of APD resources. When APD works a drug operation like the target is not just to arrest people who sell and consume drugs, we know that they are involved with other illegal behaviors tied with the narcotics.

### **• Staffing – Austin Police Department**

- AC Deaton – APD is currently authorized for 106 positions that include: Commander, 5 Lieutenant, 11 Sergeants, 8 Corporals, and 81

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officers. What APD actually has is only 70 officers so they are 11 officers short of what they are authorized for. There are a couple of other units that work traditionally exclusively in the downtown area, Mounted Patrol; 1 Sergeant, 1 Corporal, and 11 officers, and Metro Tack Unit and District Representatives.

- Chair Rossmo – Why is APD 11 officers short and how does that compare to the rest of the city and what is the direct impact on overtime costs? AC Deaton - vacancies are the same with APD as other city departments. It does impact overtime because without overtime they could not effectively staff the downtown area. There are many reasons for vacancies, it involves the hiring practice and the time it takes to convert a citizen to an officer on the streets on his own.
- Chair Rossmo – If the department is consistently 12% or so under what it should be, maybe we should be considering some type of solutions. For example, some departments authorize a sworn strength; they do not count people in training so the budget would have to reflect that. Chief Manley – When APD is approved positions in the budget it is really 14-16 months before those officers are on the street. Current attrition rate is 4-5 officers a month.
- AC Deaton – Overtime spent for 2013: \$910,000, Booking Center at Caritas Building: \$44,000. October 2013 – March 2014 \$505,184 overtime paid out. Mandated unfunded requirements like reassignments for events like SXSW are not added in to these numbers.

- **Public Works – Howard Lazarus, Director**

- Director Howard Lazarus – PowerPoint presentation on the upcoming changes to the downtown area.

**c. FireWatch Recommendation – Austin Fire Department**

1. Commissioner Ko recused himself because he is friends with someone involved with the contract.
2. Chief Evans – described approved resolution 20140213-047 to the Commissioners.
  - Commissioner Lauderdale – what is AFD's projected cost for the detection system. Chief Evans answered that right now AFD is looking at \$150,000 range per device if AFD buys one and the county buys one.
  - Chair Rossmo – Modification to recommendation: that AFD report back to the Commission a year after implementation of the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the system. FireWatch recommendation approved on Commissioner Lauderdale's motion, Vice Chair Levy's second and a 5-0 unanimous vote.

**4. Discussion Regarding Potential Future Agenda Items**

- Commissioners Future Agenda Items for May:
  - i. AWU/AFD Memo of Understanding Recommendation – Commissioner Moreno

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ii. After Action Report – October 31, 2013 Floods

- Have all PowerPoints and documents the Thursday before the meeting.

**5. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn by Vice Chair Levy, seconded by Commissioner Anschutz. Meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.