

Safety Health & Service Committee Meeting

Monday, November 10, 2003

The Safety Health and Service Committee met in the new council chambers of the John Knisely Municipal Centre at 6:30 P.M. to discuss a letter by citizen James Booth complaining about skateboarders in the 100 block of 2nd St., SW causing damage to the Masonic building and painting graffiti. Present at the meeting were committee members Rob Maurer, Art Cicconetti and Chairman Sam Hitchcock. Guests presents were Councilwoman Sandy Cox, Councilmen Joel Dayand George Houston, Safety Director Greg Popham, Citizen Kenny Van Sickle, Police Chief Jeff Urban, Citizen Ella Slough and the media.

Chairman Hitchcock explained the letter to those present and also that Mr. Booth had asked Kenny Van Sickle to attend the meeting in his place because he had another commitment. Hitchcock also stated that Mr. Booth, in his letter, claimed that calls had went to the police about the problem but was told that nothing could be done. Mr. Booth was requesting that an ordinance be created that would ban skateboarding on the sidewalks.

Kenny Van Sickle was given the floor and reiterated the complaints of Mr. Booth's letter. He also said that the Masons meet six times a year, and during the Spring and early Fall meetings attendees of the meetings would park in the area and experience problems with the skateboarders. He also mentioned the graffiti and said that it contained profanity. Another complaint was that a door to the building had the glass broken out.

Chief Urban was then given the floor and said that he objected to any additional ordinances being passed because he felt that the ordinances "Criminal Mischief" and "Criminal Damaging" would address any criminal conduct committed by the skateboarders. He did say that complaints would need to be called in for any action to take place. He also stated that the department was often operating with a three-man minimum staffing which made it difficult to answer all complaints in the city as effective as he would like. Hitchcock asked Kenny to encourage his members to report any vandalism they witness and volunteer to write statements if necessary.

The general consensus of the committee was that future complaints should be called in and the police department should attempt to answer and effectively handle the complaints. Additional patrol should be exercised when units are available and new legislation should attempted only if enforcement fails to correct the problem. This was decided on a motion by Rob Maurer with a second by Hitchcock and three yea votes.

Chairman Hitchcock then mentioned to Chief Urban a meeting of the committee earlier in the year where a concern was voiced about safety in the downtown crosswalks and possible enforcement of the crosswalk ordinance. Chief Urban was advised that the legal markings were in place to allow enforcement. Urban said he would release a statement to the public that such enforcement would begin after a sufficient warning period was observed.

At 6:58 P.M., with no further business to consider, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Sam R. Hitchcock, Chairman
SAFETY, HEALTH & SERVICE COMMITTEE
CITY OF NEW PHILADELPHIA