

Prospect Hill ResiStat Meeting Notes

January 9, 2008

City Officials Present:

Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor of Somerville

Thomas F. Taylor, Alderman, Ward 3

Anthony Holloway, Chief of Police, SPD

Capt. John O'Connor, Commander of Field Operations, SPD

Stephanie Hirsch, SomerStat Director

Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst

Crime Data:

City staff presented some of the kinds of crime data that we can share with residents in ResiStat meetings (see presentation). It was noted that most of the crime in Somerville is property crime (theft, vandalism, etc.) rather than violent crime. When discussing break-ins, the Chief and Captain mentioned that there is much that resident can do in the way of "target hardening", or making it more difficult for thieves to break in. Captain O'Connor pointed out that crime in the city is generally down by 7 percent, except for car break-ins, which are significantly up State-wide. Ethan Field mentioned the WRAP program, for registering portable electronic devices that could be stolen from cars and for educating the public about how to avoid such thefts.

<http://www.somervillema.gov/spotlight.cfm?id=38>

- A resident asked if this data was provided to insurance companies who might use it to change residents' insurance rates. *Captain O'Connor:* We don't automatically send it out, but we are required to provide it if an insurance company requests it.
- A resident mentioned that an SPD Officer had come to her home after a break-in some years ago and helped advise her on target hardening. Another resident suggested sharing information about target hardening for home break-ins, in the same way that the WRAP program educates residents about avoiding car break-ins.

Next Steps for City Officials:

- Explore the possibility of creating a WRAP-like awareness campaign/brochure about how to prevent home break-ins.

Police Reorganization:

Chief Holloway outlined the new Police reorganization to residents (see presentation). He also mentioned that 12 new Police Officers will be starting this year.

- A resident asked if other cities have organized their Police Departments using this model. Chief Holloway responded that his former Police Department in Clearwater, FL used a model similar to this one, with a focus on community policing.
- Residents asked how soon the reorganization would be implemented and when the new officers would start work. Chief Holloway said some officers have been hired and more are in the process of being hired. All of them will have to finish Police Academy before starting. Also the district substations will be created in the next few months. The staff and infrastructure for the reorganization should be in place by early summer.

Resident Priorities:

Residents were asked what issues were of greatest concern to them. These issues will be investigated and discussed at future ResiStat meetings. Residents identified these areas as being of high importance to them, (listed in no particular order):

- Theft
- Disturbances (noise, etc., including teens at Nunziato Park after dark, and people parked on Vinal Ave after dark playing the radio loudly)
- Speeding (especially on Walnut Street)
- Requesting targeted patrols for resident-identified "trouble spots"
- Animal Control (can the City do something about skunks, raccoons, animals which get into trash?)
- Traffic, particularly overflow traffic from the Somerville Ave project (both ends of Warren Street were mentioned as needing attention.)
- Violent crime and gangs
 - A resident wondered if the murder last summer was drug-related. Some residents also suggested that it would be nice to get a CTY call or other notice about a crime spike or serious incident. These residents suggested that such a call could help stop rumors, even if there was no new information.
- Snow and snow removal

Next Steps for City Officials:

- Research data on selected topics and bring to next ResiStat meeting to use to help with deeper discussions on those topics.
- The Police will put a speed monitor on Walnut Street, as a first step in addressing speed.

Other Resident Suggestions:

In addition to the priorities discussed, the following suggestions/questions were raised.

- Are there plans for repair of the Prospect Hill Tower?
- Can anything be done to clean up the rail corridors?
- What can be done to provide activities for teenagers?
- There was a shortage of recycling bins last fall, when a resident tried to obtain one.
- Some residents are in favor of switching emergency snow parking by year.
- Do the Police have regular patrols in place for certain spots, such as the Tower?

Next Steps for City Officials:

- Research possible remedies and provide information on suggestions and questions raised.