

Winter Hill East Neighborhood ResiStat Meeting Notes

Thursday, January 17, 2008

City & State Officials Present:

Carl Sciortino, State Representative, 34th Middlesex

Walter Pero, Alderman, Ward 4

Anthony Holloway, Chief of Police, Somerville Police Department

Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst

Neighborhood Updates:

Ethan Field gave updates about Fellsway West parking and signage, Foss Park, how to petition to have one's street designated for Resident-Only parking, and the Star Market closing (see presentation.) It was mentioned that it's important to consult with the Ward Alderman before petitioning to change parking restrictions. They can help residents communicate with each other about the possible impact of such a parking change on neighboring streets.

- A resident asked, "On these petitions, is it one signature per household, or one signature per building?" We confirmed that it is one signature per dwelling/apartment. (So "580 Broadway, Apt 1" could have one signature, and "580 Broadway Apt 2" could have one signature.)
- A resident asked, "Are the names and addresses verified by the City, if so, how?" City officials did not have an answer at the time, but have since confirmed that the Traffic Commission verifies that the *addresses* listed are real and unique addresses, but do not confirm the association of a specific name with a specific address.
- A resident asked, "Is 311 data public record?" Ethan Field responded that some aggregated data is public, but that some specific data is confidential to protect residents' privacy.
- Residents mentioned again that the walk signals at McGrath Highway and Broadway did not seem to be long enough. Ethan Field responded that many times the signal lengths are prescribed by Federal and State guidelines. Rep. Sciortino reported that the State had increased the time for the walk light by a few seconds recently. Residents reported that it has helped, but it could still be longer. Residents say the problem is that many cars do not stop when the light turns red and illegally run the red light. Residents say because of that, they can't start walking across the intersection immediately when the signal changes.
- The "Safe Routes to Schools" maps did not print on the original presentation. Route maps for all schools are listed at:
<http://www.somervillema.gov/Department.cfm?dept=SCHOOLS>

Next Steps for City Staff:

- Investigate which 311 data is public and which is confidential.
- Keep residents informed about any updates regarding the Star Market site.

Possible State Follow-Up:

- Can the Walk signal length at Broadway and McGrath be increased again?
 - Can the State/DCR do more targeted patrolling of that intersection to monitor for cars who run the red light at that intersection (especially McGrath northbound)?
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Police Data and Reorganization:

New Somerville Chief of Police Anthony Holloway presented details of the upcoming reorganization of the Police Department. (See presentation).

- A resident expressed concern about being able to report crime anonymously through 911 and whether doing so could make them a target. City staff responded that except when requested and in extreme circumstances, Police do not visit the home of someone who calls 911 to report a crime in the neighborhood. Residents can further request anonymity when making a 911 call. Residents can also report crime by email, and request anonymity: <http://www.somervillema.gov/Section.cfm?org=POLICE&page=101>
- A resident asked about the new districting: Can the district lines move? Chief Holloway responded that the "Rapid Response Team" will be available to move around the city as needed on an immediate basis and evaluated weekly at Com-Stat meetings. District boundary lines will likely be evaluated 3-4 times per year and redrawn if necessary
- A Fellsway West Resident remarked that they thought the 911 jurisdiction on Fellsway West was confusing. This resident knows that the SPD and the DCR share jurisdiction over Foss Park for general enforcement. However, when calling 911, any mention of Foss Park results in being transferred to the State Police. This resident told a story of one night in which there was a fight between two people in Foss Park. The resident called 911, was transferred to State police, who then came and broke up the fight. A few minutes later, this resident said, the fight resumed on the other side of Fellsway West. The resident then called 911 again, and City Police came and broke up the fight. The resident thought that there should be some way to streamline this process.

Next Steps for City Staff:

- Investigate what the procedure for handling 911 calls to State-managed property is, both in theory and in practice. Determine what the best way to keep City-based neighborhood police informed about immediate crime to which State Police are responding.

Possible State Follow-Up:

- Pending the outcome of above questions, explore the possibility of making sure City police are informed when State Police are responding to a 911 call within the City. Investigate current practices for keeping City Police informed.

Next Steps for Residents:

- Call 911 whenever you see or suspect crime in progress. The Police will protect your anonymity if requested.

Other Issues:

A resident raised concerns about what they see as a high level of hostility directed towards illegal immigrants and day laborers; the resident observes this in the anonymous call/online portions of the local newspapers (e.g. SpeakOut in Somerville Journal). This resident wondered, "Is this really representative of how my neighbors feel?" This resident felt it was a quality-of-life issue: They did not want to think that this kind of hostility was common in their neighborhood.

- Residents who live near Foss Park were generally in consensus that they are not personally bothered by the day laborers, unless they actually break laws. These residents were not personally concerned about the immigration status of the day laborers.
- Residents agreed that the anonymity of the comments led to people saying things they wouldn't ordinarily say in public. Others agreed, but pointed out that the newspapers are private businesses and can choose to print what they want. Two residents mentioned they had cancelled their subscriptions for this reason.