

Magoun Square ResiStat Meeting Notes

February 25, 2008

City Officials Present:

Anthony Holloway, Somerville Chief of Police

Jessie Baker, Senior SomerStat Analyst

Ethan Field, ResiStat Analyst

Ward 5 Alderman Sean O'Donovan had an unexpected family obligation and sent his regrets.

Magoun Square and Trum Field House Renovations:

Ethan Field gave an update on planned State-managed renovations for Magoun Square, and for City-managed renovations of the Trum Field House. (See presentation)

Magoun Square:

- A resident commented that some kind of renovation of has been discussed for at least 5 years, and that residents are eager to see things begin to happen.
- This resident was also concerned that there seemed to be a discrepancy between what they heard at the State-sponsored meeting on Dec. 3rd, at which this resident recalled State officials saying they wouldn't go out for proposals until the Spring of 2010... and tonight's presentation, that estimates breaking ground by late 2008 or early 2009.
- This resident also requested that we put any information we have about design, etc. on the City website.
- Another resident had overhead someone talking about making Hinckley Street a One-Way street, and wanted to make sure that there was *significant* community involvement before such a decision was made. Ethan Field said that changing any street from two-way to one-way is a major undertaking and would not only require overwhelming neighborhood consensus, but also a study of how that change in traffic flow would affect nearby streets and neighborhoods. It will not suddenly change overnight.

Trum Field House:

- A resident asked what the Field House will actually feature. City staff responded that in addition to the more attractive architecture and shade, there will be indoor restrooms, where patrons can also change clothes. There will not be showers.
- A resident asked who the private contributor is. Jessie Baker responded that the Sloan family, formerly of Hinckley Street, are the contributors.
- A resident commented that the bleachers also need to be replaced. (*City Note:* There are no current plans for replacing the bleachers.)

Police Reorganization and Crime Data:

Ethan Field and Chief Holloway presented and explained City crime data. (See presentation.) Ethan also asked what kind of data residents would be most interested in seeing.

Data:

- Residents responded that they are most interested in seeing crime data for the neighborhood.
- Residents said they'd be most interested in comparative data: How does Ward 5 compare to other Wards, and how do different neighborhoods within Ward 5 compare to each other? There was also interest in seeing how crime patterns have changed over time.

Community Policing:

- Residents were very supportive of the move back towards community policing. They say community policing worked well in the past.
- Residents urged Community Police officers to talk directly with individual residents, and invited the Chief to attend the next neighborhood party. A resident said that many long-time neighborhood residents feel they know who is committing the crimes, and where the "problem houses" are, but that newer residents are oblivious. This resident said that neighbors don't want to talk about neighborhood problems in a large public forum, for fear of retribution or of property values declining. This resident said that neighbors are more willing to talk one-on-one with a community police officer or an Alderman who can solve the problem without drawing too much attention to it.
- Chief Holloway responded that residents will see more of their community police officers on foot and on bikes as the reorganization is implemented this year. He also mentioned the anonymous crime tip line: 617-776-7210.
- A resident asked if **public housing** is included in the community policing program. The Chief responded that police certainly respond to concerns in housing developments, though the Somerville Housing Authority also employ their own security personnel.

Specific Crime Concerns:

- A few residents mentioned a concern with the **growth of brush and weeds** on the old rail bed beyond the current Community Path terminus at Cedar Street. These residents said that there have been break-ins in abutting properties on Alpine and Princeton Street, and were concerned that the brush in that area provided cover for thieves. The residents were aware that there had been discussions and negotiations about whose responsibility it is to clear that area. They felt that the City should maintain that area until those discussions are finalized.
- Residents also were concerned about **crime in empty homes** that are in the process of being sold. They wondered if there was some formal way for home sellers to inform the City that their home would be empty. The Chief responded that there wasn't currently such a system, but that it was an idea worth exploring. Ethan Field also added that abutting neighbors can be very helpful in keeping an eye on such houses and calling 911 if they suspect crime.
- A resident wondered if police were spending time on **parking enforcement** that could instead be done by Parking Control Officers (PCOs). *City staff update:* Calls to 311 about parking violations are almost always directed to PCOs and not Police. Urgent issues (e.g. a car blocking a fire hydrant) may receive faster responses than less urgent issues (e.g. a car violating a resident-only parking restriction).

Next Steps for City Staff:

- Confirm anticipated timelines for the Magoun Square renovations to ensure that City and State have the same expectations, and post any relevant info about the renovation plans to the City web site as it becomes available.
- Bring neighborhood-specific crime data and data comparing wards and neighborhoods to the next meeting.
- Make community police officers available for informal neighborhood gatherings if invited.
- Explore how residents could best keep the police informed of empty houses in the city that could be more susceptible to break-ins.
- Clear the brush and weeds on the old rail bed between Cedar and Lowell Streets, and develop a plan for regular maintenance until the Community Path is extended.

Next Steps for Residents:

- Keep the Police informed by inviting community police to attend neighborhood gatherings. Also, use 311 or the anonymous tip line to share information with police.
- Inform new neighbors about key concerns or things to watch out for in the neighborhood.
- Keep an eye on empty homes in the neighborhood, and report any signs of unexpected activity to police.