

City of Gainesville

*City Hall
200 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 17, 2005

9:00 AM

City Hall, Ground Floor, Room 16

Public Safety Committee

*Commissioner Tony Domenech, Chair
Commissioner Ed Braddy, Member*

Persons with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this meeting are requested to notify the Equal Opportunity Department at 334-5051 or call the TDD phone line at 334-2069 at least two business days in advance.

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Domenech called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m.

Present: Edward Braddy and Tony Domenech

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Domenech moved and Commissioner Braddy seconded adoption of the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Domenech moved and Commissioner Braddy seconded approval of the January 20, 2005 minutes as presented.

DISCUSSION OF PENDING REFERRALS

040297 Taxi Cab Companies Safety Violations

Captain Lynne Benck provided a summary of the recommendations detailed by the Taxi Cab subcommittee that included five different goals, broken out with points to meet the goals. The Chamber of Commerce was invited to comment on these recommendations and felt they were in the best interest of the companies and the citizens. Cpt. Benck noted that the ordinance would need to be changed to incorporate the goals that would add to the safety and make the businesses more equitable for all.

Mark Benton, Finance Director provided staff's review of the current application process and fee structure. Gainesville's occupational license fee is \$52.50 for the first vehicle, plus \$10.50 for each additional vehicle, with a maximum fee of \$525.00. The franchise fee is a flat fee of \$250.00. He surveyed five other cities for fee structures, and although Gainesville's fees were the lowest, the Finance Department is not proposing increasing the fee structure. They do recommend that the cost of the medallion or sticker be passed on to the user in the form of a permit fee, collected by Finance, along with the other required fees. With regards to the process, there is very little additional cost to staff, as Finance already takes the application and distributes to Risk Management and GPD.

Assistant City Attorney Ron Combs provided a draft amended ordinance, as requested, that incorporates the subcommittee recommendations. He noted that the revocation period referenced in Section 28-6 (d), page five can be any number of years the Commission decides. C/Braddy suggested he might want to survey other cities to see what they use as a reasonable revocation period. Mr. Combs pointed out that the committee had not taken any official stance on any of the subcommittee recommendations. C/Braddy stated he did not see anything that would cause pause, and it appeared that these recommendations would help fix some of the concerns that

have been brought forward. The committee agreed to leave this item in committee for another month.

There were no citizen comments to this item.

Continue discussions at March 17, 2005 PSC meeting.

RECOMMENDATION The Public Safety Committee receive staff reports as requested, hear from staff and citizens, and take action to report this item out of committee.

Discussed

040547 Dangerous Dog Issues (NB)

Citizen Kathy Meise asked the committee for an extension to work with her neighbors more on this issue. She advised that the problem neighbor and the dogs have moved.

The Committee agreed to continue discussions at the April 21, 2005 PSC meeting.

RECOMMENDATION The Public Safety Committee hear from citizens and take appropriate action.

Discussed

040424 Bar Closing Times - Discussion with University of Florida Student Government

Assistant City Attorney Ron Combs provided some verbal findings of his survey of other municipalities (from the peer cities list) regarding bar closing times. He noted that some web sites provided closing time hours, some only alcohol serving hours and others noted variances, depending upon the day of the week. Those surveyed via the web included Chapel Hill, NC; Champaign, IL; Colorado; Indiana; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Louisiana; Orlando, FL; Tallahassee, FL; Austin, TX and Virginia. All seemed to hover around the 2:00 - 2:30 a.m. for closing and/or serving alcohol. Mr. Combs will provide a more complete listing at the next PSC meeting to include a distinction between the time alcohol is stopped being served and the time of the bar closing.

Dr. Phil Barkley, UF presented a power point handout that expressed why the University of Florida was interested in the difference between the 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. closings. In a meeting with UF and city and county officials yesterday (including the two PSC Commissioners), three issues were discussed - 1) access is a problem, 2) enforcement is a problem and 3) culture of use and abuse is a problem. In his overview of the handout, he provided national data and UF survey data. He commented that a person's level of intoxication seems to be a personal issue, i.e., "I'm drunk and I'm ok" but it affects others around them. He added that it is difficult for students to find something to do in Gainesville that does not involve alcohol. Lohse Beeland, Director of Student Activities at UF followed up by providing an "Initiatives and Accomplishments" sheet that included the things that UF, the city and other local

groups have done in response to the alcohol concerns. She noted that Student Government is dealing with issues overwhelmingly from alcohol use. She stated that UF strongly stands behind the GAAP committee stance that a 2:00 a.m. bar closing is the right and safe thing to do for our students.

UF Student Joe Goldberg provided a written missions statement from the SAFE (Safety and Fair Entertainment) Committee and advised that he wanted to be clear that SAFE is not promoting underage, binge or irresponsible drinking and further understands that drinking is a problem among students. He indicated they feel their proposal would help alleviate some of the problems and advised that they are still conducting research of other university communities. He discussed the current partnerships and recommended a comprehensive marketing campaign, use of Tow and Go, extension to Later Gator bus service and support for more late night student activities. He concluded his review of his handout by stating that the focus needs to be on bar closing times and not getting wrapped up on the other side issues, and finally, that SAFE is promoting a safer environment.

Dan Burkhardt with Anehauser Busch spoke briefly about the Tow to Go program sponsored by the them and AAA, which includes free rides home to those who have had too much to drink on certain special holidays. They would like to work on having that program (free service) more often. He later advised that they also sponsor speeches at local schools and would like to bring that speakers bureau to the UF level.

Citizen Joanne Auth expressed concern that the whole focus appears to be enabling people to do more drinking and remarked that she felt peer-to-peer education tends to be most effective; and peers should encourage peers to be more responsible. She suggested sale of alcohol could stop at midnight and the patrons could stay until 2:00 a.m. - and rather than a community reaction, they could make it a peer-to-peer issue.

Ms. Beeland responded to the issue of education and stated that education is always the response. She agreed that although the SAFE ideas are excellent ideas, they are all being done or all have been shown to be the least effective in dealing with this problem. Further, the marketing message is saying "it's ok to drink", regardless of the age. She noted that Student Activities at UF has a "Stuff to Do" brochure program and web site with over 1,000 activity opportunities for students to take part in.

Gwen Love, Corner Drug Store advised that in reviewing a Florida Youth Survey, middle and high school students should and need to be the focus of the message to these students.

C/Domenech expressed appreciation for Mr. Goldberg's presentation and agreed that it is difficult to stay focused on just the closing issue when there are other issues out there. He asked police department staff to show in their summary that they will have for the next meeting, just what the staffing impact would be if the time frame was moved to 3:00 a.m.

Anthony Ackrill, citizen expressed his support of staying with the 2:00 a.m. closing, and noted that as a homeowner, living seven blocks from the downtown area, that he

is kept up all hours of the night already due to the noise from the bars. He stated that he calls police frequently and does not want to extend that noise any longer. He concluded his feelings that the students are guests in Gainesville and are generally the only ones out that late, while responsible citizens are at home. Mr. Goldberg responded in agreement regarding the noise, but argued that many students stay in the community, and regardless, are voting/ taxpaying citizens where all should try to work together.

Dr. Barkley stated that if the question is - is extending bar hours going to impact the health and safety of our community, then he has not heard from one health official or law enforcement official that it is a good idea. He wondered if the bars had been surveyed to see if they are even interested in staying open later. Mr. Goldberg advised that his committee is in the process of conducting that survey. Ms. Beeland asked where the assurance would be that there would be enforcement of no drinking between 2 and 3 a.m.

Chief Botsford asked what the Student Government's position would be if the extension were granted, but under 21 was prohibited from being in the bars - would there be a compromise which would certainly then discourage underage drinking? Mr. Goldberg indicated they would not be supportive of that.

Citizen Neil Beckerman suggested that if students are given a venue, they will find a way to drink, even after the serving time ends, using a flask, going to their cars, etc. Mr. Goldberg commented that having a safe public place with guardianship would be better than at a private party.

C/Braddy asked staff to comment on how the extension of hours will impact this community, and if the issues are exacerbated, can they be offset by some of what SAFE offers. He asked for the impact to health and safety and the impact on city resources, in writing on what that all means. He suggested it would likely be a fiscal impact to the (officer) staffing levels. He commented that the city wants an excited student body, but as the host, the city does have a role to play culture attendant to social problems, i.e., noise. He suggested these are the issues that will help the City Commission come to a decision. He spoke of the law of unintended consequences and pondered, if one negative could be an increase in ecstasy again (as was a previous issue in years past). An unidentified speaker suggested that the dramatic decrease in ecstasy occurred nationwide and suggested a generational fad that no longer exists. Chief Botsford commented that ecstasy has not gone down in this community.

There was discussion concerning past history of Gainesville bars being regionally recognized as "the place to party" and the impact of potentially again attracting a population from other areas of the state.

C/Domenech asked the Chief to also include in his report back to the PSC in April a graphic detail to show what bar owners will do, if this is passed (Mr. Goldberg noted that his group will provide that survey result) and a cause and affect graphic portrayal of the impact on police resources.

David Idelman, Superior Towing introduced himself as a vendor and supporter of the

Tow to Go program and advised that his company would be proposing to the city a decrease in towing rates.

Mr. Jeffrey Flowers of Scan Technology, Inc., gave a presentation on identification scanners.

Commissioner Braddy asked how or if student judicial affairs could become involved. Nora Kilroy, UF Director of Off-Campus Life advised that her office has a great relationship with GPD and already is provided party patrol stats, names and addresses involving students on a weekly basis from GPD for her office to follow up on. She noted that they would like to expand to include ASO in that endeavor.

The Committee will continue discussions at the April 21, 2005 PSC meeting.

RECOMMENDATION *The Public Safety Committee continue discussions, receive the requested reports, and receive citizen and staff input.*

Discussed

MEMBER COMMENT

CITIZEN COMMENT

None

NEW BUSINESS

040903 Remote Surveillance System/Confidential Funds Enhancement from Federal LECFTF for the Special Investigations Division (NB)

The Public Safety Committee approved forwarding this item to the full City Commission (consent agenda)

RECOMMENDATION *The City Commission approve the appropriation and expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$79,500 from the Federal Law Enforcement Contraband Forfeiture Trust Fund for the Special Investigations Division Confidential Funds Enhancement and Remote Surveillance System.*

Approved as Recommended

040957 Technology Upgrades and Renovations to the Gainesville Police Department's DataTrac Room (NB)

The Public Safety Committee approved forwarding this to the full City Commission (consent agenda).

RECOMMENDATION *The City Commission approve the appropriation and*

expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$76,000 from the Federal Law Enforcement Contraband Forfeiture Trust Fund for renovations and equipment upgrades to the Gainesville Police Department's DataTrac Room.

Approved as Recommended

NEXT MEETING DATE

March 17, 2005

ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned at 11:20 a.m.