

MINUTES
PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 16, 2024

1. The meeting was called to order at 4:00PM by Chairperson Aaron Wahl.

2. Roll Call

Councilmember Aaron Wahl, Ward II, Chairperson, Councilmember Barbara McGuiness, Ward I, Councilmember Michael Moore, Ward III, Councilmember Merrell Hansen, Ward IV, Councilmember, Mayor Bob Nation, Councilmember Mary Monachella, Ward I, Mary Ann Mastorakos, Ward II, Elliott Brown, Assistant City Administrator, Jim Eckrich, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, Nathan Bruns, Assistant to the City Attorney, and Chief Cheryl Funkhouser. Councilmember Dan Hurt, Ward III arrived later during the meeting. The meeting was also attended by several citizens.

3. Approval of Minutes

Councilmember Hansen motioned and Councilmember McGuiness seconded to approve the minutes of the August 26, 2024 meeting. The motion carried 4-0.

4. Traffic Flow near the Riparian Trail Walkway

Chairperson Aaron Wahl led a discussion regarding traffic and pedestrian safety at the crosswalk on August Hill near the Riparian Trail. Mr. Rob Kilo, who lives near the area voiced concerns about adherence to the posted speed limit and drivers not adhering to the posted yield signage. Mr. Kilo asked that the committee consider placing signs noting "State Law Stop" or a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) similar to that located on Schoettler Drive at Logan Park. Mr. Kilo also explained that cars and trucks parked near the crosswalk sometimes restrict the visibility of the signage. He requested that additional No Parking signs be considered. Mr. Kilo provided pictures.

Discussion followed. Councilmember Hansen noted the traffic problems occur during rush hours and also during events at the City Park.

Mr. Eckrich informed the committee that Missouri State Law requires that motorists yield – not stop – at crosswalks. He also stated that Missouri State Law prohibits parking within 20 feet of a crosswalk.

Mayor Nation noted that the crosswalk is clearly marked and suggested that residents be informed about the laws regarding vehicles driving in this area.

The Public Health and Safety Committee directed Mr. Eckrich to investigate the crosswalk and determine whether different or additional signage should be installed. Once that analysis is completed Mr. Eckrich is to report his findings to the Committee who can then determine what, if any, action will be taken.

5. Unfit Buildings

Elliot Brown updated the Committee members on two specific problem properties that were discussed at an earlier meeting and recommended an update to the City's Unfit Buildings Codes. He noted that staff had reviewed ordinances from other municipalities. Many of the other municipalities have language defining a dangerous or unfit building as one that is "unsafe, unsanitary or dangerous to the health, safety or general welfare of the people of this City." The City's current Unfit Building codes define them as "those which are so dilapidated or unsafe as to be likely cause injury to the life, health, safety or welfare of the neighbors." Expanding the definition to all people of the City would allow the City to move forward with interior inspections if a structure is suspected of being dangerous or unfit for the occupants. The City could then conduct an interior inspection, declare the structure a nuisance, and then order its repair, vacation, or demolition depending on the result of the inspection. The inspection would be conducted by a licensed, contracted engineer or inspector instead of a member of the staff or St. Louis County.

Mr. Brown also informed the committee that the City would need to readopt the International Property Maintenance Code to allow for St. Louis County inspections of problem properties. If County inspectors found any violations, the property owner would be prosecuted in the Chesterfield Municipal Court.

Discussion followed.

At the direction of the Public Health & Safety Committee, a new ordinance will be developed and be presented for review at the next Public Health & Safety Committee meeting.

6. River Valley Gate – Flash Flooding

Chief Funkhouser addressed the Committee members regarding a recent flash flooding event. She noted that as heavy rain developed in the area, officers checked the area around the River Valley gate several times. Officers also handled a large tree that fell into the roadway and blocked Creve Coeur Mill Road. As they finished that call, they returned to the River Valley Gate and observed flooding in the area and unlocked the gate to allow traffic to flow through the area.

Because of the quickness of the flash flooding, Chief Funkhouser has now directed that the gate be opened when a Flash Flood Warning is issued by the National Weather Service. The Committee and all members in attendance were satisfied with the City opening the road ahead of flood warnings and closing the gate when the rain event ends.

Chief Funkhouser noted that Creve Coeur Mill Road and Waterworks Road are low-lying roads outside the City of Chesterfield that may flood. There is no expectation at this time that St. Louis County or Maryland Heights will take action to adjust these roads. Members of the Committee suggested that representatives of the City meet with St. Louis County Councilmember Mark Harder to possibly have St. Louis County address the flooding issues on Creve Coeur Mill Road.

7. Update of Juvenile Related Ordinances

Nathan Bruns addressed the Committee noting that recently the State of Missouri had changed the definition of juveniles to be those under the age of 18. Previously the age had been defined at under the age of 17. To comply with State Law, an ordinance was presented to conform the City of Chesterfield with the State Law.

Councilmember Wahl motioned and Councilmember Moore seconded to approve the new ordinance and send it to City Council with a recommendation for their approval.

Discussion followed. The members specifically addressed curfew limitations.

Councilmember Hansen motioned to remove the curfew limitations for juveniles. This motion failed for the lack of a second.

After further discussion, the Committee voted 4-0 to approve the changes to current ordinances regarding juveniles.

8. State of Missouri Law – Use of Electronic Devices

Mr. Bruns reminded Committee members that the State Law regarding the use of electronic devices while operating a motor vehicle go into full effect on January 1, 2025. Chief Funkhouser noted the impact this will have on violations within the City of Chesterfield. She informed the Committee members that officers may begin issuing tickets to those who use electronic devices (cell phones) while driving as of the January 1, 2025, date. This does not include hands free operation of the devices. Officers will utilize this as secondary violation when a vehicle is stopped for other violations and may issue tickets for this violation if the officer discerns that the utilization of a device is a safety issue on the road.

9. Update on Radio Agreement with St. Louis County

Chief Funkhouser informed the Committee members that the current agreement with St. Louis County regarding the portable radio equipment and its interoperability on the St Louis County radio system will expire at the end of 2024. This agreement requires that the City of Chesterfield continue to equip officers with portable radios that ensure interoperability on the system as established by the St Louis County Emergency Communications Commission (ECC) and in return requires that the ECC continue to maintain the radio system that the portable radios will operate within. An ordinance was presented for the Committee's approval that will extend the agreement with the City of Chesterfield and St. Louis County for an additional ten (10) years.

Councilmember Hansen motioned and Councilmember McGuinness seconded to approved the ordinance and send it on to City Council with a recommendation for their approval.

The motion passed 4-0.

10. Animals at Large (Leash Law)

The Committee addressed the current ordinance governing animals at large and provisions listed in Section 205.120 of that ordinance.

Mr. Eckrich reminded the committee members that the current ordinance was put into place at the time of the incorporation of the City. At that time there were many large parcels of private property in the area and that residents wanted the ability to allow their animals (in particular their dogs) to roam those areas without a leash if the animal could be voice controlled within 50 feet of the owner. At the current time, there are many more subdivisions with smaller plots of property with many residents who walk their animals in these areas. The ordinance now needs revision to update the leash law. It was suggested to now require all animals be leashed in public areas if those animals are not on private property.

After discussion, the committee members agreed to direct Mr. Bruns to bring a revised ordinance to the committee that will limit all animals to be on a traditional leash. Mr. Bruns will review other municipal ordinances to develop this ordinance.

This item will be placed on the next Public Health & Safety Committee agenda.

11. Individuals Sleeping in Public

The committee addressed recent incidents of unhoused individuals sleeping in public areas of the City.

Chief Funkhouser informed the committee members on the actions currently taken by Police Officers when they come into contact with unhoused individuals. She noted that the officers are well informed about resources available to these individuals and officers encourage the individuals to take advantage of the resources and encourage their use. The officers often transport individuals to the locations and make sure the agencies are available for the individuals.

Mr. Bruns informed the committee members that a new ordinance which would limit overnight sleeping, camping, on public property including sidewalks and right-of-way, parks, and bus stops in the City but not criminalize the conduct of the unhoused.

After discussion, the committee unanimously directed that Mr. Bruns draft an ordinance regarding this issue for review at the next meeting of the Public Health & Safety Committee.

12. Other

There was no other business.

13. Next Meeting

No meeting date was set at this time.

14. The meeting adjourned at 5:42 PM

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