



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

The Public Safety Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at the Busby Street Community Center, 1735 Busby Street, Columbia, SC 29203. The Honorable Will Brennan, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Will Brennan	Chair	Present
Tina N. Herbert	Member	Present
Peter M. Brown	Member	Present

PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATES

1. Columbia Police Department Briefing - Mr. William “Skip” Holbrook, Police Chief – *Received as information*
 - *Year-to-Date Crime Report*
 - *Vehicle Pursuits and Technology*
 - *City Camera Update*
 - *Vehicles for Hire (Taxi Cabs)*

Police Chief Holbrook shared the Police Department’s year-to-date numbers, highlighting a positive trend with overall crime down by 18% compared to the previous year. Specific decreases include robbery and assault by 22%, auto break-ins by 24%, and motor vehicle theft by 36%. He underscored the benefits of ShotSpotter technology, noting a corresponding increase in police actions following alerts, despite a decrease in alert frequency.

Investigator Cannon Fulmer, Crime Analyst/Columbia Police Department presented insights from dashboards that included gun seizures, auto break-ins, ShotSpotter, and gun violence.

Police Chief Holbrook provided updates on the operational status of 199 camera sites, including license plate readers at key neighborhood entry and exit points. He said we’re working with our camera vendor, Motorola, to put together a package to introduce our business community to potential increased camera coverage. That, along with additional technologies, are still in process of being implemented.

Sergeant Robert Uhall, Traffic Safety Unit/Columbia Police Department discussed pursuit policies, emphasizing strict criteria, ongoing assessment, and post-event reviews. He introduced the Grappler for safely immobilizing fleeing vehicles and highlighted StarChase's GPS tracking effectiveness in other municipalities. He detailed regulations governing taxis versus ride-sharing services like Uber, noting the city's 123 taxis, all passing recent inspections. Starting a taxi



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024

company requires a Certificate of Convenience and Necessity, involving coordination with the Director of Public Works to meet vehicle color and ordinance requirements (Section 24). Inspections, now streamlined to a week annually, include meter seals and vehicle decals for fare accuracy.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager urged staff to identify and address overly burdensome aspects of current processes, while emphasizing a need to streamline operations to enhance business friendliness.

There was discussion about camera footage from private businesses; media engagement strategies; the growth of ShotSpotter; the increase in gun seizures and a notable decrease in guns stolen within jurisdictional limits; the correlation of dashboard data with gun-related public service announcements; receiving an update on the pilot of StarChase technology; and streamlining non-employee centric processes by using online applications.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

2. Proposed Right-of-way Signage Ordinance - Ms. Jazmon Kearse, Esq., Advisor for the Columbia Police Department – *Endorse for City Council Consideration*

Ms. Jazmon Kearse, Esq., Advisor for the Columbia Police Department said we made minor changes to Chapter 22 of our code section, with the additions of code sections 2275 through 2277. She shared amendments aligning local laws with state regulations concerning signage in public right-of-ways. This encompasses all types of signage, including political signs. A new city ordinance supplements state penalties with a signage removal fee. Upon notification of unlawful signage placement, recipients have a 10-day window to appeal to the City Manager or designated authority. The fee structure is tiered based on the number of infractions. She clarified that multiple infractions on the same day count as a single offense. Efforts are underway to enhance enforcement using technology to identify repeat offenders, particularly in high-traffic areas.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager Wilson emphasized the collaborative effort involving various city departments. She highlighted the importance of ensuring all city staff are well-versed in the rules to handle inquiries effectively. She also promoted the upcoming launch of the "MyColaSC" app as a convenient tool for residents to submit complaints, emphasizing its potential to streamline communication and enhance public engagement during campaign seasons and beyond.

There was discussion about the prevalence of illegal political signs; how the lack of communication on how to report signs impacts beautification efforts; deterring promotion of



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024**

illegal businesses; public education campaign; and temporarily storing removed signs, especially during campaign seasons, while acknowledging challenges in long-term storage.

There was consensus of the committee to endorse the proposed ordinance for City Council approval.

3. Fighting Hate on Main Street Municipal Toolkit - Ms. Jessica Kinard, Esq., Senior Assistant City Attorney – *Received as information*

Ms. Jessica Kinard, Esq., Senior Assistant City Attorney said the Mayor wants to ensure that our ordinances are up to pace with the stringency of the provided model ordinances. She reviewed overpass banners, which currently lack specific regulations due to their location typically falling under state Department of Transportation jurisdiction. Existing city ordinances cover banners over streets like Elmwood Avenue, requiring city approval for placement and removal. She suggested that the committee consider drafting an ordinance to regulate these banners, with particular attention to content approval.

Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager welcomed feedback and collaboration from city staff to refine proposed amendments and explore additional measures where necessary. She encouraged staff to take this under advisement and to work with various departments, especially the Columbia Police Department and Public Works to determine what is needed and what can't be done.

There was discussion about differentiation between non-controversial projections like sports championships versus potentially divisive or offensive messages; enhancing the graffiti ordinance to include safeguards against demeaning language and hate speech; overnight soliciting and canvassing; and ensuring ordinances aren't treating protests differently than large gatherings.

There was consensus of the committee to continue this conversation further, following suggestions from Legal and the Police Department.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:



**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024**

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk