MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY
August 8, 2016

Tracy Corr opened the meeting on Monday, August 8, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, City/County/Building, in Lincoln, NE.

Attendance

Twelve residents and three City staff attended:

Tracy Corr – 40th & A NA
Russ Irwin – Clinton NO
Karen Dienstbier – Eastridge NA
Pat Anderson-Sifuentez – Everett NA
Myrna Coleman – Highlands NA
Scott Hofeling – Ridge South
Lin Quenzer – Mayor's Office
Wynn Hjermstad – Urban Development Dept.
Carl Tesch – Autumn Wood NA
Jennifer Powell – Country Club NA
Ray Crisip – Eden Park NA
Jess Roe – Far South NA
Amy Karabel – Irvingdale NA
Mike DeKalb – University Place CO
Jon Carlson – Mayor's Office

Welcome & Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves. Jon Carlson agreed to take meeting notes.

Mayor's Comments

Mayor Beutler could not attend.

Community Policing in Lincoln

The discussion was led by Jeff Bleimeister, Lincoln Police Chief, and Tom Casady, Public Safety Director.

Casady provided a brief history of Community Policing at the Lincoln Police Department (LPD). LPD has been a remarkably stable department with only six Chiefs in the last 75 years. Lincoln's Community Policing program began in 1977 under Chief Hansen. Casady was actually a part of the original "Neighborhood-based Community Policing" task force as a Sergeant. Community Policing involved two strategic changes. One change was to organize the City into seven geographic LPD units (five units now). Prior practice had assigned officers to different areas on a day-to-day basis. The second change reemphasized the function of uniformed officers and expanded their roles as generalists (learning and using a broader range of skills). With Community Policing, uniformed officers followed cases through to their conclusion, instead of handing off cases to detectives. That increased the involvement of officers and heightened their roles in the community as problem solvers. These strategies remain in effect today as part of LPD's broader community engagement. Demonstration of involvement in the community is now a major factor in the LPD promotion process.

LPD public relation efforts go beyond just letting the public know what the department does. LPD engages the community, involving citizens in all levels of department activity: policy making, promotional boards, and mechanisms for feedback/criticism. Community Policing in Lincoln is not a program – it's a value system that focuses on working cooperatively with citizens and organizations to identify and resolve issues that affect the livability of their neighborhoods and community.

Chief Jeff Bleimester moved to Lincoln in 1990. After working in the Sherriff's office for over 20 years, he has a deep appreciation for the partnerships that are a fundamental within our community. One recent example involved ATM/gas pump scammers. LPD could not actively watch every gas station or ATM, so LPD reached out to station/ATM owners/operators. The owners/operators have stepped up, changing the locks and placing serial-numbered sticker seals on the pump/ATM access panels. To help develop good, working relationships with gas station clerks, LPD officers drop by, introduce

themselves and share a (recently drafted) informational/resource pamphlet. This is an example of how partnerships increase safety and information exchange.

LPD uses their partnerships to try and help address the deeper issues affecting the community. Mental Health is an example. He noted that while LPD has responded to 577 calls related to a violent crime to date this year, during same period, LPD has responded to 1,568 mental health related calls. Officers receive training on how to help with mental-health related calls. LPD has strategies and protocols to help during that response, but there is a desire by all involved to do more. The Community Health Endowment has funded a peer-to-peer program to help. When officers go out on a call, they have the option to contact the Mental Health Association (MHA) to create a follow-up contact. The program is reducing repeat calls for service, but more importantly, it has improved the quality of life for those individuals in need.

Casady pointed out that the peer-to-peer program is an example of Problem Oriented Policing (POP), an approach that gets at the underlying causes of calls - not just dealing with the immediate need. Many jurisdictions have become "prisoners of the 911 systems" - waiting for the next call to come. LPD officers are trained to spend time investigating root causes and trying to discover what additional resources are needed to solve problems.

Bleimeister said LPD also understands how community engagement helps develop the relationships that create a higher level of response and service when a crisis occurs. When the community believes that officers are their partners in resolving issues, outcomes are greatly enhanced for everyone.

Bliemeister said LPD continually strives to do better. While Community Policing in Lincoln has been a positive, LPD still needs to hear from the public about what they think and what they need. For an example, body cameras are something the community has suggested. LPD agrees that they would be a great policing tool, but there are challenges, too. The biggest is cost -- $750,000 in the initial year for the equipment purchase, plus $500,000 every year after for the staff to process, analyze, and store the data. In addition, new equipment needs to be compatible with the existing system. The conversation about priorities and the associated costs needs to continue.

- Pat Anderson asked if litigation costs were an offset to the costs of operating a body camera system. Casady said they can be, however Lincoln is fortunate to not have significant litigation costs. Bleimeister agreed, but acknowledged that Lincoln is not immune from something happening in the future. Officers are well-trained, but they are human beings.
- Mike Dekalb asked to talk about race-relations and student-relations. Bleimeister responded that LPD has been proactively engaging in Community Conversations about these and other issues and concerns. John Harris is facilitating a Community Conversation event on 8/25/16 at 7:00 pm at F Street Community Center. More Community Conversation events will be held at the Malone Center on August 16, 23, and 30. LPD was also fortunate to be asked to participate in the Lincoln Black Lives Matter movement. Beyond engagement, LPD has increased education and training for officers. Fair and Impartial Policing is a curriculum that focuses on everyone's internal biases. It recognizes that we may have a certain intrinsic feelings, but we learn not to react to them. Ethical and unbiased treatment of those we serve is a basic value that is continually incorporated into all LPD briefings and training.
- Casady and Bleimeister were asked how officers and staff were doing in light of the officer deaths across the country. Casady said that law enforcement is inherently a difficult and dangerous profession. The current circumstances in the country (Dallas, Baton Rouge and other places) certainly affect everyone here in Lincoln. It can be frightening for officers and families, but Lincoln’s public has been very supportive.
- Pat Anderson reminded those in attendance that Neighborhood Associations should let LPD know of other meetings beside monthly meetings. Bleimeister agreed. LPD goes to many Neighborhood Association meetings and would be happy to attend more, including social events. Mike Dekalb asked if there is a process to invite/request LPD to attend an activity.

Casady said there is not, currently, beyond contacting Captains or sergeants. LPD wants to know the opportunities so they can make efforts to attend. It can be challenging to commit for certain because of the fluctuations in day-to-day operation. Officers may get hit with a lot of calls during the meeting times. Typically, LPD is able to attend, so please ask.

- Karen asked about youth programs. Bliemeister listed a number of youth programs including the gang intervention unit, Explorer programs for high school aged youth, and a lot of events like Santa Cop, Shop with a Cop, Pop with a Cop, Cops and Bobbers, etc.
- Dekalb asked how recruitment was going in Lincoln. Casady responded that he had just worked with the new recruits (all college grads) and continues to be impressed with the caliber of applicants. The pool seems very stable, but we are always looking for good people. A college degree is a good indicator of a person wanting to learn and continue to learn. Bleimeister said his perception is that the tenure rate for local law enforcement is very good.

Everyone appreciated the opportunity for the Community Policing conversation.

Announcements

- Wynn Hjermstad announced that Public Works has asked the Urban Development Department if they can take down the old NCIP signs in the neighborhoods. The Nebraska Community Improvement Program (NCIP) ended in the 1990's, but many neighborhoods still have the old signs posted on Public Works poles. Urban Development okayed the sign removals, after Roundtable leaders were given a heads up – hence, this announcement!

- Rifka Kielson from Country Club NA and Mark Koller from Capitol View NA both passed away. They were great community leaders and will be missed.

Next Meeting/Agenda

The next meeting of the Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable will be September 12, 2016 at 5:30 p.m. The topic will be the changes coming to StarTran.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:50 p.m.

Notes submitted by Jon Carlson.