

Neighborhood Watch Organizational Meeting November 3, 2009

Minutes

Meeting came to order at 7:15 PM.

**Attendees:**

Mayor Kathy Strom, Dennis Carroll, Bob Lyford, Catherine Cecere, Scott Egloff, Maree Webster, Sharon Light, Bill Glew, Shelley Lowenstein, Betsy Hague, Warren Rizzi

After introducing the members present, there was a review of the program and the three training sessions. One member mentioned how it could be effective if the Neighborhood Watch could incorporate keeping an eye out for the elderly residents in the Town. This was an aspect that the training sessions did not cover but something the Town's program could develop. The group wanted to circulate the entire list of contact information which was distributed but cell phone numbers still need to be collected.

It was announced that the DVDs are available for residents to view all three of the training sessions. The group discussed how it would be useful for the committee to condense the information from the training sessions into a comprehensive packet for residents. Two members agreed to make a packet with the requirements and expectations for block captains. They will develop a packet for block captains with help from information from other communities. Members of the committee voiced their opinion that the block captain pamphlet should be kept simple and brief to not dissuade them from volunteering. Part of the information would be when it is appropriate to contact your neighbors and/or the police.

Gathering information from the County and the Police Department to disseminate to residents would also be effective in gathering support for this program. It would give the Neighborhood Watch credibility. Disseminating this information door-to-door would allow block captains to introduce themselves to neighbors and spread useful information. One member suggested including information on how to join both the Town Crier and Townneighbors listservs. It would be useful to create a web page on the Town website with Neighborhood Watch information.

In many programs, each Block Captain is responsible for 10 homes but until more block captains are recruited, more homes may need to be covered by each person. Members did see how it is unrealistic to have all Town blocks covered, at least at the program's inception. Once the program progresses, block captains should be assigned areas they are going to cover. This could be one of the last pieces implemented and members noted how it could take months for all of the blocks to be covered in the Neighborhood Watch program. Block captains located near one another need to coordinate so they do not overlap. One member suggested that volunteers could choose how many homes they feel comfortable with covering. This would help to increase the number of volunteers by allowing them to create their own coverage. Another member suggested that the Town be divided into quadrants which would allow the coordinator and the committee members to identify which areas needed a block captain. The area that the

block captain covers should be an area that they are familiar with which will allow them to notice anything suspicious or out of place more easily.

It was agreed that passing along notes directly to neighbors is an effective way to disseminate information because the listserv that the Town controls does not reach the entire community. Part of the information given to residents would be the phone directory.

The Community Relations committee would review the information that the Neighborhood Watch committee prepared to help communicate with the Town. The Town Council would also review the program and offer any suggestions. They would also need to approve Neighborhood Watch materials. It is not a separate committee of the Town but linked to the Community Relations Committee.

One issue that was raised was whether Neighborhood Watch could make recommendations to the Public Services Committee and/or the Town Council on safety issues. It was decided that no formal recommendations were necessary but on a citizen level, informal recommendations to the Town would be a natural outcome of the program. This could even come in the form of Safety Tip of the Month in the Town newsletter.

An article explaining the progress of the Neighborhood Watch program should go into the December Forecast. It should explain how, thus far, the program has achieved significant success and it still could use volunteers on specific blocks. The members agreed that targeting dog walkers is a good idea because they would be ideal as block captains. They know other residents through their walks and are familiar with the Town.

The members agreed that it would be beneficial to stay in touch with both the Maplewood and Rollingwood communities as they initiate their watch programs. All three communities would be able to learn from one another and stay informed on issues they are facing. The communication would go through the Neighborhood Watch coordinator and could be on a quarterly basis. It is also important to keep a strong and open relationship with the MCPD especially through Officer Dana Stroman.

Members would like an agenda prior to the next meeting. This would tell residents that the program is still under construction and would allow them to plan accordingly. The program is still looking for input from residents as the plan is being formulated.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 19 at 7PM in the Town Hall.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.