

## **SOUTHWEST NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEETING**

Thursday, January 20, 2022

7:00 PM - 8:45 PM

[Meet Recording](#)

Draft Minutes

This meeting was scheduled to start at 7:00 via Zoom, but was delayed for 30 minutes due to technical difficulties. It began instead at about 7:30 pm.

1. Welcome and call to order - agreement to bypass usual opening and proceed immediately to guest speakers.
2. Speaker: **Gresham Chief of Police Travis Gullberg**
  - 1) Grew up in the SW Gresham; graduated from Centennial 1987
  - 2) COVID Omicron - affects staffing at the police department; causes challenges to provide services, but we are optimistic. Our struggles help us come together.
  - 3) Staffing shortages - working to retain and recruit new staff
  - 4) Participating in Imagine Gresham will help us look to the future - includes safety issues
  - 5) Going through assessment - will get recommendations in 4-6 months
3. Speaker: **Gresham Police Officers Association Vice-President Daniel Tatro**
  - 1) Check out Gresham's Finest Facebook page to get info about city and police issues. This site gives police perspective on what is happening.
  - 2) Oct 2021 shooting incidents have gone up 96%
  - 3) Shootings involving injuries up 261%
  - 4) Not what we are used to - can be blamed on many different things, but what we do we have control over? One thing we do not have control over is how the District Attorneys (DAs) prosecute crimes
  - 5) Police perspective: DAs are refusing to prosecute crime, blaming lack of staff or Covid - they claim they 'always ask for people to be held' but they are refusing to prosecute crimes - rejecting prosecution at an unusual rate.
  - 6) Tatro has 3 cases on his desk that the DA is refusing to prosecute - there is a person who did the crime, a victim, but the DA blames COVID on crimes; "we can't prosecute" While sheriffs do determine jail space, some criminals are being freed before they are even prosecuted.
  - 7) Frustrating to do our job but not be supported by DAs.
  - 8) Ask DAs and Sheriffs 'hard questions' about what is happening.
  - 9) We appreciate the people of Gresham supporting the Gresham police force. We want our neighborhoods to be livable.

#### 4. Questions and Answers

Q: Does the mayor and city council give you the support you need when it comes to taking care of crime?

A: A corner has been turned recently. There has been a good meeting with the city - in the past, communication wasn't as good as now; we feel supported by the city. Our contract is up July 1 and we are addressing retention issues. We hope our ideas will help us work well with the city. Voice of the community has been strong, and it does change the city's response.

Chief of Police: I feel fully supported as chief of police by the city government; we are working with shared goals and strategies; I am optimistic about our future even though I haven't been here long.

Q: How can we put pressure on the D.A.s?

A: D.A.s have a lot of control over what crimes are going to be prosecuted, which makes it difficult for police to know if they are going to be supported.

An upcoming Neighborhood Coalition will be attended by both the sheriff and the D.A. These are elected positions. It will be a good time to ask hard questions about crime prosecution and get politicians to 'change their ways.' The police union does not have a lot of power in that area.

Police Chief: We want to meet with all leaders and work as a team - D.A., sheriff, police - we all need to work together to serve the community.

March 8 - Coalition Community meeting with sheriff and D.A. - all are invited.

Comment: Things are not better. Situations are getting worse.

Tatro: While there have been some laws that have hampered proactive policing, if the laws that are on the books would be acted on as they were intended, we would see a big difference. It is a statewide issue.

Chief of Police: There are many different ways of handling situations, but we haven't changed our approach; we haven't been asked to. We are struggling with staff shortage but that hasn't changed our concern and approach for Gresham.

Comment: ODOT owns property but if it is in PDX territory; no one wants to do anything. It's all about politics. We need to get past that.

Comment: Appreciated the handling of the recent bank robbery situation.

Chief of Police: It is hard on the officers that had to deal with it. Keep them in your prayers.

Comment: Who do we put pressure on to make crimes, like car thieves, better prosecuted?

Tatio: The difficulty is the loophole in the law: you have to prove the person driving the car KNEW the car was stolen. Criminals would say, "I'm borrowing it from a friend" and so the case got rejected. Police began asking better questions but still difficult. The truth is that crime is not singular. Stolen cars are usually connected to drug issues. However, minor drug possession issues are not prosecutable as they are no longer against the law. We no longer have dedicated drug units, so drug use and abuse is on the rise, but we can't prosecute

Legislatively we need to fix the language of the law - drugs are easier to get and there are fewer consequences, so criminal behavior to support the drug habit is on the rise.

Police Chief: The ones getting their car stolen are those who need their cars the most to get to work. These are people who are underserved, financially challenged and struggling to make it. There are unintended consequences of laws we make.

Question: Why can't GRESHAM have stronger rules than the state regarding drug and car theft? If a state can tell the federal government they aren't going to enforce immigration, why can't a city government tell the state they want to have stronger laws against criminals?

Police chief: City manager? What do you think

## **5. Speaker: Gresham City Manager Nina Vetter**

Has been with the city for 7 months and wants to share the city's most pressing issues. Below includes information from the slide she shared, including links for more information.

### 1. IMAGINE GRESHAM!

Gresham, what are your big ideas and dreams for your community? Help us make those dreams come true! (Use link below to add your ideas)

<https://cityofgresham.us.engagementhq.com/imagine-gresham#17071>

### 2. SAFE GRESHAM

Safe Gresham is a community violence initiative to address gaps in the services provided to the community. Safe Gresham focuses on three strategies that work together at the same time: collaboration, intervention and prevention.

<https://greshamoregon.gov/Safe-Gresham/>

### 3. URBAN RENEWAL

A citywide vote in 2003 established the 1,211-acre Rockwood-West Gresham Urban Renewal Area. The 20-year Urban Renewal Plan is improving Rockwood's economy and community, and is a partnership among residents, property and business owners, and the City of Gresham. The urban renewal district expires in 2023. This would leave \$37 million unused. We propose extending the urban renewal district to 2029. The extra six years would allow us to invest \$92 million in new projects to improve this neighborhood's quality of life.

<https://greshamoregon.gov/Urban-Renewal/>

### 4. FEDERAL DOLLARS

The City has received \$12.7 million in American Rescue Plan Act funds and anticipates participating in grant and other funding processes from the federal Infrastructure Bill.

<https://greshamoregon.gov/ARPA/>

### 6. Questions and Answer

Is there a standard percentage of affordable housing that goes with crime?

City Manager: There is such a wide mix of housing needs - every city is different. We have conducted a housing capacity analysis. We looked at what current housing stock and land availability we have - what is the gap? Supply vs demand? Our study showed there is enough land to meet demand, but we need a diverse mix of housing. The next step is the housing demand analysis - we want a rich diversity of housing.

The health of a community includes more than just housing. It includes full services - help and activities for families, including good parks and safe trails. All of those things contribute to supporting families and youth.

<https://greshamoregon.gov/Housing-Capacity-Analysis/>

Question: What are the civilian positions that were added to the police department?

Police chief: We have hired technicians, evidence and crime scene processing, supporting investigators, and a crime analyst to collect data. We have hired five but are looking for an additional six.

We are also looking to add back officer positions. We have support on this, but it is a process that takes time. If you hire a police officer, they need training at the state academy, but it is not happening like it did in the past. Currently, there is a 5 - 6 month delay for training officers. Civilian positions don't take police academy training so we are able to hire them more quickly.

Comment: We are concerned with traffic enforcement and speeding. We realize you have many priorities, but this is a concern for our area. Also, there is street racing on Thursday and Friday nights on Highland and would appreciate attention to this.

Question: There have been four fatalities on Highland and Powell. Can there be more control over street racing by engineering traffic patterns?

Chief of Police: We are always working with other city departments to see if traffic control will help this situation. I would encourage you to reach out to other city departments to ask the questions of how this can be fixed. The city of Portland passed an ordinance prohibiting road racing, so we know it will be coming our way.

City Manager: Use MyGresham to let them know your concerns.

Question: At the old Kmart parking lot, behind the police department, there must have been about 100 cars revving up. I tried the non-emergency number but had to give up because I never got an answer. MyGresham would not have helped me in this situation.

Chief of Police: We contract with the Portland Bureau of Emergency Communications - we've had discussions with them as it has not been a good relationship. We are trying to improve that non-emergency process...even the emergency process is 8 or 9 minutes. We are working on this system, but at the moment, we don't have control. We did see the situation in the K-Mart parking lot and need to make an ordinance like Portland did regarding this issue. We are stuck with this system, but we are working on improving it.

Comment (Michael) - Please participate in the Imagine Gresham campaign. We want the community to participate and share their ideas. Encourage others by placing a yard sign in your yard.

Comment: The Gresham Barlow School District is looking for ideas on what to do with West Gresham Elementary School. I strongly encourage people to give their input on this beautiful building. Here is the link: [Repurposing West Gresham Elementary School](#)

Gail: Thank you to the three speakers.

7. Land Use: Kathy - There has been no movement on the Butler School Land Division; this is still under review. If there is development, we will be notified.

9. Approval of October 21 minutes

10. Treasurer's Report: \$488.88 in account

Gail: Congratulations to Dana who is now Secretary/Treasurer of the Neighborhood Coalition.

11. July 21, 2022 Meeting - Brandon

Historically there has been a picnic BBQ block party for July. We'd like to do it again. Susan Wells suggested it also be an information fair - should contact these organizations should be organized soon.

There are resources - a free block party trailer from the city; the city can provide a grant but it needs to be asked for.

We are looking for volunteers. We will plan for a SW Gresham Neighborhood Association Block Party.

12. Bylaws Review - Brandon

Last reviewed and adopted in 2017. Small changes are needed to reflect minor updates. Brandon, as Vice Chairman, would head the committee. Three more people are needed. Brandon asks for volunteers to contact him for the task, which should take no more than an hour.

13. Gresham City Charter Review Committee - Jack Gardner, vice chairman; 12 members

Had first meeting January 10; scheduled another Feb 7.

City has asked the committee to study the issue of the election of district city councilors vs at large councilors. The city has hired two professors from Lewis and Clark University to provide legal and historical background. This will be in a public meeting on Zoom. The time of this will be shared with the Association.

The charter is reviewed every 8 years.

14. Meeting Adjourned at 9:00