

**Coalition of Gresham Neighborhood Associations
September 13, 2022 – Remotely Held (Zoom)
Meeting Minutes**

NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES	NEIGHBORHOOD	ATTENDEES
Centennial	Rick Dwyer	Northeast	INACTIVE
Central City	INACTIVE	North Gresham	Michael Elston, Linda Parashos
Gresham Butte	Jim Buck, Theresa Tschirky	Northwest	Kat Todd, John Bildsoe
Historic Southeast	Phil, Svabik-Seror	Gresham Pleasant Valley	
Hogan Cedars		Powell Valley	Stella Butler
Hollybrook		Rockwood	Catherine Nicewood
Kelly Creek	Charles Teem, Carol Rulla	Southwest	Gail Cerveney, Dana Duval
North Central	Mary Gossett	Wilkes-East	
Staff & Guests	DA Mike Schmidt, Multnomah County District Attorney (MCDA); Sheriff Mike Reese, Multnomah County (MC); Sheriff-Elect Nicole Morrissey O'Donnell, MC; Elisabeth Shephard, MCDA; Deputy District Attorney (DDA) Mariel Mota, MCDA; Councilor Vince Jones-Dixon, Gresham City Council; Tom Stanley; Sue Ruonala; Jack Ardner; Dale Cerveney; April Avery		

The meeting opened at 7:02 p.m., Jim Buck, Coalition Co-President presiding. Meeting minutes for August 9, 2022, were approved as written. Additionally, there was no quorum at the August 9, 2022, meeting, approval of the July 12, 2022, minutes was postponed to this meeting. The July 12, 2022, meeting minutes were approved as written.

1. The Coalition provided a list of questions in advance to the MCDA and the MC Sheriff's Office. The questions were concerning the following topics: staffing shortages in the MCDA Office and the MC Sheriff's Office; area gun violence; release of arrested individuals; current open case trends; changes to concealed weapon permit process; coordination between the MC Sheriff's Office and the Gresham Police; and the coordination between the MC Sheriff's Office and various other local government agencies on the complaints of RV's, boats and other vehicles being abandoned or parked in areas violating code regulation.

a. The MCDA Office provided written response to the questions prior to the Coalition Meeting.

b. Co-President Jim Buck put forward the questions for response from our guests DA Michael Schmidt, Sheriff Mike Reese and Sheriff-Elect Nicole Morrissey O'Donnell, as well as Elisabeth Shephard and Deputy DA Mariel Mota from the MCDA Office.

1) Staffing shortages:

DA Schmidt: In 2007 the MCDA Office had 100 prosecuting attorneys. In 2020, there were only 72 budgeted prosecuting attorney positions. Currently there are 90 attorneys on staff at the MCDA Office. This has been done with support from the County Commission using ARPA funding, federal stimulus dollars, grants, and dollars from building new relationships with organizations (example: Gresham Police Department provides dollars for a half-time DDA). Still, compared with other counties of similar size, the MCDA is understaffed. As an example, San Francisco, which is about the same size and population as MC, has almost twice the number of attorneys. MCDA is still lean but is headed in the right direction both in hiring and morale.

DDA Mota: Concerning morale: The MCDA is getting blamed for things that are not in their control and it is a tough time to be in law enforcement in general. Recruitment and retention have always been an issue. Private sector lawyer positions are easier and pay better. Many lawyers do not want to deal with homicide cases. There has been an improvement in morale, especially as more attorneys are being hired.

Sheriff Reese: MC Sheriff's Office has the responsibility for running the jail system (MC has two of the largest jail facilities in the state); traditional policing for unincorporated MC and the contract cities they serve (Fairview, Troutdale, Maywood Park, Wood Village); search and rescue; river patrol unit for 110 miles of waterway; and civil process (when the courts have an order that needs to be carried out such as a restraining order). A lot of parts to a very large organization. There are almost 800 people working at the Sheriff's Office. This includes Corrections Deputies, Deputy Sheriffs, and non-sworn professional staff. Recruitment and retention is the number one issue, exacerbated by underfunding. The Sheriff's Office is and has been actively recruiting for all positions. The pandemic affected the ability to hold job fairs and interviews. They had to pivot to move all their recruiting to a virtual process. Many deputies who were at or close to retirement age retired, causing even more vacancies.

Sheriff-Elect Morrissey O'Donnell: Corrections is 65% of the organization with 375 positions—35 of those positions are currently vacant. Law Enforcement has 102 positions (not including supervisory positions), with 8 of those position currently vacant. Recently held their first on-site recruiting event. To help with recruiting they are looking at attending training to learn best recruiting practices; providing incentives such as vacation leave and moving expenses; increasing technology (on-line applications and virtual interviews); robust media recruiting; broadening college connections (internships); and increasing community engagement to increase diversity and interest from people that may not have previously been interested in public service.

Sheriff Reese: Is the Sheriff's Office representative of the diversity of the community? The MC Sheriff's Office is the most diverse law enforcement organization in the state but not as diverse of the community. Does the MC Sheriff's Office have a volunteer deputy program? Yes, there is a robust reserve deputy program—search and rescue is dependent upon volunteers. When Portland disbanded their reserve program, the MC Sheriff's Office took over their program.

2) Release of arrested individuals:

Sheriff Reese: This is an area where there is a lot of misinformation or lack of awareness of how the criminal justice system works regarding when people are released from custody. When a police officer or deputy sheriff makes an arrest, they

have a choice to either issue a citation for the person to appear in court or to bring them to the booking facility. If they are brought into the booking facility, they will go through a discernment process where recognizance officers that work for the Department of Community Justice under the direction of the court will look at the charges and the person's criminal history, and make a decision on whether or not the person should be released from jail based on the presiding judge's order which guides these decisions on how people should be released from custody.

DA Schmidt: One of the issues right now is the lack of defense attorneys. When judges do not have a defense attorney to assign a person, they have to come back 30-60 days later to see if there is a defense attorney to assign to the case. Without defense attorneys, pre-trial or release conditions are not being given to the released person such as not going near a person (victim) or not to drink alcohol, etc. An extra 20-50 defense attorneys would go a long way to shoring up our immediate needs.

Sheriff Reese: When someone fails to appear for their hearing, the judge has the opportunity to issue a bench warrant for their arrest. There is no one in the criminal justice system that actively goes out and looks for these people. This would require an enormous amount of resources for our police departments or sheriff's offices. Typically, they wait for that person to be arrested for a new crime or otherwise comes into contact with someone in law enforcement. At that point, the data system is queried for warrants. A person with an arrest warrant is taken into custody and is probably going to be held for arraignment where the judge will make a decision to hold or release based on that failure to appear. It is possible for someone to "fly under the radar." If they do not come into contact with law enforcement, they may never be brought in for processing.

DA Schmidt: There are people that we know are dangerous, possibly having committed serious crimes such as gun violence, for whom they are actively searching. Law enforcement often get tips and other information from the community to help apprehend the person.

3) Current open case trends:

DA Schmidt: During the pandemic, jury trials were not being done. A jury trial is what gets a case settled or otherwise closed, so the cases were backing up. Now that jury trials are being done, the lack of defense attorneys has slowed the progress. The MCDA Office does not have data on the number of felonies being investigated but currently, there is about an 80% issuance rate (cases received from law enforcement where the case was "issued" for prosecution). As an example, looking at Portland Police data for burglaries, of the number of burglaries being reported, only about 9% are referred to the MCDA for prosecution. Of that 9% referred to the MCDA, there is an 80% issuance rate.

4) Gun violence reduction:

Sheriff Reese: There was an uptick in gun violence in early 2020 across the area. The Sheriff's Office pulled together their partner agencies—MCDA, Gresham Police, Portland Police, Parole and Probation Office, and the Office of Violence Prevention of the City of Portland—to come up with strategies to share and to work on collaboratively. Some examples of the outcomes are the Portland Area Crime Gun Initiative (an

information sharing “hub” for strategies and case prosecutions) and Safer Multnomah (agencies come together to go after some of the most violent offenders in our community).

Sheriff-Elect Morrissey O’Donnell: Some of the resources that have been added: a detective position to work along side the Gresham Police, the Major Crimes Team, Oregon State Police, and the Port of Portland; and two deputies to work along side the gun disposition sergeant to proactively get guns out of the hands of people that are prohibited from having them by the court system (since January, 212 firearms have been removed). With dramatic increase in crimes, they are focusing more effort where they are seeing the violence.

DDA Mota: MCDA Access Attorney Program (MAAP) places attorneys out in the community to be more collaborative with the people that live there but to also reach out to victims, workplaces, business owners and others that are being impacted by gun violence. Currently there are two pilot programs for MAAP, one in Old Town Portland and one in East County. Additionally, they are working on funding for a position in Rockwood. These DDA positions would engage with the community to look for more holistic solutions to the gun violence problem. The MCDA has a gun violence unit with some of their most experienced attorneys specializing in gun violence crimes.

5) Changes to concealed weapon permit process:

Sheriff-Elect Morrissey O’Donnell: Prior to changing to the new software for concealed handgun license (CHL) the process required a lot of paperwork and was very labor intensive. The application process still has to be completed, people still have to come in for fingerprinting and photographs, and the background check process is still in place. The process is essentially the same, but the front end of the process is more efficient. The technology adds increased accountability with more checks and balances.

6) Coordination between MC Sheriff’s Office and Gresham Police

Sheriff Reese: The Sheriff’s Office and the Gresham Police have joint collaborative teams, such as, the tactical team, the rapid-response team, and the East County major crimes team. The Sheriff’s Office and the Gresham Police have a good relationship and often share resources.

7) Coordination between MC Sheriff’s Office and other agencies on complaints of RVs, boats and cars that are abandoned or parked in violation of code regulations:

Sheriff Reese: In the jurisdictions where the MC Sheriff’s Office provides policing service (Fairview, Maywood Park, Troutdale, Wood Village, unincorporated MC), they investigate the garbage dumps and try to get clean-up done. In the waterways, it is very complicated as to who’s jurisdiction a boat is in. They are working with organizations and legislators to pass some laws that may create some funding resources to remediate the issue with a derelict boat before it sinks. It is three times more costly to remove a boat after it sinks.

Sheriff-Elect Morrissey O’Donnell: The homeless outreach programs engagement (HOPE) team, consisting of two deputies and a supervisor, are actively connecting with people that are camping or living in a vehicle to try to break down the barriers to help get the resources needed to get them into safe housing.

2. City Council Candidate Forum discussion:

a. Carol Rulla, Coalition Co-President stated that tonight we want to focus on a general idea of the 3 big questions we want to present to the candidates in advance. We will have a group of volunteers to work on these questions as well as a list of other questions for the candidates. The group will consist of Carol Rulla, Jim Buck, Matt Callison, Rick Dwyer and Gail Cerveny. Carol asked if anyone else would like to volunteer.

b. The candidate forum process and how it was done in the past was also discussed to provide information for all Coalition members.

c. Several members presented ideas for candidate questions which the volunteer group will use to formulate questions for the candidates.

3. Neighborhood and City News and Neighborhood Reports:

a. ONCE Report: no report

b. Co-President Report: no report

c. Neighborhood Reports:

1) Jim Buck (GBNA): Gresham Butte used a grant to create a peace plaza in Main City Park. The dedication will be Monday, September 19th at 10 a.m.

2) Carol Rulla (KCNA): Kelly Creek is holding an open house for the Lind-Carpenter property on September 17th, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. A postcard mailing was done for this event, but the postcards have not been received.

3) Stella Butler (PVNA): The Burnside Bridge Earthquake Readiness Project will have an open application period for anyone that may want to join the design work group.

4) John Bildsoe (NWN): Northwest received a notice that the East County Library is starting to take shape. A basic plan has been submitted to the City of Gresham.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dana Duval – Coalition Secretary-Treasurer

Next meeting: Tuesday, November 8 October 11 meeting is cancelled (Candidate Forum)
