



MESQUITE RANCH NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

MEETING MINUTES

For

TPD/MRNA Fact Finding Meeting

LOCATION: TPD East Division Facility (Harrison and Golf Links)

DATE: December 27, 2007

TIME: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

This meeting was initiated by Officer Corina Chavez of TPD and held to discuss support concerns and other issues raised by the Mesquite Ranch Neighborhood Association Board of Directors and local residents.

ATTENDEES:

Capt Bill Washington - (TPD)
Sgt Bill Plummer - (TPD)
Sgt. Kevin Gilooly - (Detective TPD)
Mr. Randall Pierce (President, MRNA)
Mr. Terry Hlivko (President, MRHOA)
Mr. Roger Montemayor (Mesquite Ranch resident)
Ms. Renee Sowards (Ward IV)

GENERAL

Randall Pierce opened conversation by informing TPD that MRNA appreciates law enforcement and the efforts they are making to protect both existing and newly developed neighborhoods. MRNA recognized that existing TPD resources may be stretched in an effort to cover increasing population and development, particularly in southeast Tucson (Ward 4).

Capt. Washington noted that the East Division consists of eight sectors; Mesquite Ranch falls in sector 8. East division boundaries are west to Craycroft, north to foothills, east to Pantano Wash (approximately) and south to southern city limits. There are no police facilities in sector eight. The police station at the Golf Links facility serves all of the East division.

ISSUES

An October 2007 email sent to the Tucson Mayor and Council, "MCWEB" outlining several neighborhood issues was discussed. Those issues were:

1. Slow response times to recent "shots heard" 911 calls
2. The need for definitive lines of jurisdiction for TPD/County east of Mesquite Ranch, and education of officers responding to calls to know the areas of jurisdiction
3. The need for street signage which discourages use of firearms and off-road vehicle operation
4. Recommendation to implement task force to monitor firearms discharge and off-road vehicle operation east of Mesquite Ranch

5. Recommendation that a "no-tolerance" policy for firearm discharges in city limits be put in practice
6. The need for follow-up of previous 911 calls

DISCUSSION

Firearm discharge within City limits - Randall Pierce identified the problem of firearm discharge east of the Mesquite Ranch subdivision beginning in October 2007. Several 911 calls have been made to TPD in an effort to identify those who are firing weapons east to west between Mesquite Ranch and the Pantano Wash, and north to south between Bilby and Poorman Roads.

Mr. Pierce emphasized that even the ballistics associated with a 22 caliber long rifle round show that the bullet will travel up to 1.5 miles which is well within the distance between Mesquite Ranch and the Pantano Wash. Of great concern are those who target practice with higher 38, 40, 357, and 44 calibers.

Mr. Pierce highlighted the fact that L.A. Downey and Sons, a sand and gravel business at Pantano Wash, have come to work finding bullet holes in their delivery vehicles and there are documented instances of bullet holes piercing east facing perimeter housing in the Desert Willow subdivision just south of Valencia Road.

Mr. Pierce communicated the necessity to resolve the problem of firearm discharges within City limits and to preempt an unnecessary shooting through vigilance and City statute enforcement.

Jurisdiction - Randall Pierce described the recent series of 911 calls reporting "shots fired" east of Mesquite Ranch where TPD responses were slow resulting in no identification of offenders. Mr. Pierce indicated that one officer responding to a call communicated there was some ambiguity as to where the city limit line of jurisdiction falls east of Mesquite Ranch and felt the need to communicate with "county".

Sgt Plummer provided a map which indicated that the area east of Mesquite Ranch to the Pantano Wash was either Vail school property or state property, however, all of the property fell within the city limits, and was thus within the jurisdiction of TPD. Sgt Plummer stated that the State Game and Fish Department may be the best agency to handle firearms discharge issues (hunting related), however, their response times are not conducive to expedited 911 calls, and thus it was recommended that Mesquite Ranch residents continue to call 911 for firearms and off-road vehicle violations. When calling 911 for shots heard east of Mesquite Ranch, the caller's address should be given, with an explanation that shots were heard east of the neighborhood.

Capt. Washington re-iterated that 911 should be called for firearm discharges within city limits. If a Tucson address is given, TPD will respond. TPD will work with Game & Fish to determine if Game & Fish can do something to reduce the illegal firearm discharge activity. If an officer responds that the area east of Mesquite Ranch is not in their jurisdiction, the resident or caller should inform the officer that this meeting confirmed that the area east of Mesquite Ranch to the Pantano Wash is in fact inside established city limits, and TPD should respond.

Response Times - Sgt. Plummer noted that response times to some of the recent 911 calls have not been within department guidelines. The calls were assigned either priority 3 or 4 (1 being the highest, 4 being the lowest), because the gunfire was described as likely originating from hunters. The response time to one October 27 call greatly exceeded guidelines (195 minutes over); Sgt. Plummer explained that on this day, the East division was inundated with many higher priority calls. Subsequent calls were either close to the guideline, or less than 30 minutes over.

Street Signage - Renee Sowards communicated that she has talked with city and state officials about the signage request, and it has been agreed by city and state that "no trespassing" signs will be placed at selected locations. It was discussed that the area east of Mesquite Ranch can be accessed from a number of areas where signage may not be

practical. Mr. Pierce asked that MR be allowed to review the wording on the signs, and that specific language prohibiting firearms discharge and off-roading be included in the signs. Renee indicated the signs were already being created, but that she will check to see if wording can be reviewed before the signs are put up. Renee also indicated there are "no trespassing" signs currently at Bilby and Poorman, but MR representatives could not recall seeing such signs or where they may be posted.

Task Force - Randall Pierce suggested that TPD consider forming a small surveillance task force or deployment to monitor the area where shots have been heard (especially at the start of hunting season). Randall indicated that most discharges appear to be within the first 2 hours after sunrise, the last 2 hours before sunset, and on weekends as those are common hunting times.

Capt. Washington agreed to assigning uniformed officers to monitor for gun discharges and illegal off-roading, in the area east of Mesquite Ranch.

No-Tolerance Policy - Mr. Pierce presented the position that TPD should be issuing mandatory citations and confiscating weapons for all discharge violations rather than issuing warnings, suggesting it only takes one stray bullet to cause harm or death to a resident, however, he also pointed out that individual beat officers should follow established enforcement guidance which may provide greater tolerance. He explained the area between the eastern Mesquite Ranch subdivision boundary and the Pantano Wash is a popular walking and exercise area for many Civano, Mesquite Ranch, Sierra Morado and Desert Willow community residents. Firing weapons in this area unnecessarily places residents at considerable risk.

Capt Washington indicated TPD's current strategy is public education first. Citations are issued when a suspect knowingly discharge firearms in city limits. Capt Washington communicated that he would review current enforcement policy and modify if deemed appropriate. Detective Gilooly noted that discharging a weapon within city limits is a class 6 felony, although when taken to court, the charge is most often reduced to a misdemeanor by the district attorney's office.

TPD will discuss internally the level of investigation needed to ensure that the appropriate response for officers can be documented (e.g., no-tolerance, education followed by citation, etc.)

It was suggested that an educational flyer be created so that officers can distribute them to individuals caught discharging firearms, or off-roading. Renee Sowards will follow-up with this task. In addition, it was suggested that a write-up on the subject be printed in the Vail Sun and Tucson Daily Star, as well as a possible story on a local news channel to educate Tucsonans that City annexing and development of neighborhoods is encroaching on areas where hunters and gun enthusiasts could previously fire their weapons legally.

Follow-up of Previous Calls - Privacy issues make it difficult to reveal details of subsequent activity related to 911 calls. But, Mesquite Ranch attendees wanted to be sure that something was being done, especially when suspects are identified. Capt. Washington gave Randall Pierce authorization to call the captain's office directly if specific questions surface concerning the status of follow-up to previous calls.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

1. The city will continue with signage; Ms Sowards will check to determine if wording can be reviewed before the signs created or installed and notify MRNA of the answer. Signs to be placed on Bilby Road, Poorman Road, and possibly Old Spanish Trail.
2. Capt. Washington will establish a deployment strategy to send officers to observe the area east of Mesquite Ranch for weapons discharge, and off-road violations.
3. Capt Washington will discuss the level of investigation and response (warning, citation, etc.) for the weapons discharge incidents.
4. Ms Sowards will work with TPD to develop an educational flyer about weapons discharges and off-road vehicle operation within city limits, and make available to

patrol officers. In addition, Ms Sowards will generate articles to be printed in the Vail Sun/Tucson Daily Star "Neighborhoods" section highlighting the issue of off-roading and firearms discharge within City limits with emphasis east of Mesquite Ranch.

5. Capt Washington will reiterate to patrol officers that the area east of Mesquite Ranch to the Pantano Wash is within city limits, and that officers should investigate weapons discharge calls in this area.
6. Capt. Washington offered to Randall Pierce direct access to call the Captain's office if specific questions arise about the status of previous calls.

Respectfully submitted,

Randall Pierce
President, MRNA

Roger Montemayor
MRNA Resident