

Public Safety Committee Meeting April 19, 2016

The Public Safety Committee met Tuesday, April 19, 2016, at 7:00 pm in the City Hall Conference Room. Present were Committee Members John Uden, Kathy Wilcox, Jeff Erlenbusch, and Ken Gardner. Also present were Councilperson Brant Kassner, Police Chief Doug Colombik and Committee Recorder/Deputy City Clerk Linda Wilkins.

1. Request of Citizens

None

2. Committee Member Comments

Committee Member Wilcox requested a future discussion regarding the position of shared Detective. She requested Police Chief Doug Colombik be present at that meeting to provide possible alternatives to a shared detective.

3. Review and consider recommendations regarding Citizens maintain bee hives with the city limits

Committee Member Erlenbusch stated that about one month ago Citizen Kelly Thibault called him regarding the animal section of the city ordinances and its impact on keeping bee hives within the city. He didn't know, but contacted Jim Simpson of Simpson Honey Farms to find out what he knew about keeping bees within the city limits. He discovered there is not an ordinance prohibiting keeping hives within the city limits. He was concerned with the liability to the city. State regulations do not cover 10 hives or less as this is not considered commercial keeper but hobbyist. Mrs. Simpson has kept less than 10 hives within the city for years without incident. He was concerned with the proximity of Citizen Thibault's hives to Jefferson School. He would like the city to be proactive about the issue instead of reactive.

Committee Member Uden agreed and had completed some research on bees. The city of Billings has some regulations. The state only inspects commercial bee hives. If a hive becomes infested with killer bees or a type of fungus the state can order the hives to be destroyed. He pointed out keeping bees helps to beautify yards. He suggested that Miles City pattern any ordinance after the Billings ordinance. Honey bees are not aggressive bees, his concern is really not the keeping of the hives themselves, but the curiosity of children and upsetting the hives.

Citizen Jim Simpson stated that honey bees are not aggressive and a scout bee goes out early in the morning to find a nectar source, then returns to the hive to lead the other bees to the source. School yards would not be a problem, there is not a good source for nectar at any of the school yards and bees fly at a height above where children would be playing. Bee hives should be concealed and this would help with any curiosity from children. It is also important that an adequate source of water is kept for the bees near the hive.

Committee Member Wilcox was concerned over citizens who may suffer from bee allergies and being stung severe enough to cause anaphylactic shock.

Committee Member Gardner commented that honey bees are not aggressive; he thought it would be good to determine citizen concern or lack thereof. Possibly look at the proximity of the hives to a joining neighbor, the amount of land needed per hive. Possibly licensing hives as a tracking mechanism for the city. He agreed that it is important for the city to be proactive not reactive in address this issue.

Citizen Simpson asked if Billings specified the number of hives per household. Committee Member Uden stated that it did.

Citizen Kelly Thibault made the point that if a person was severely allergic to bees that they would know this and in most instances would carry an Epi-pen with them to counter anaphylactic shock. He also stated that there have been bee hives in the city for years.

Committee Member Gardner thought it may be a good idea to have Epi-pens available to police officers or on the ambulance.

Chief Colombik stated that they have two EMT's on the Police Department. He said they have more issues with vicious dogs. He would like to review the ordinance that Committee Member Uden has and thought it would be a good idea to step back and review ordinances and do things the right way.

Committee Member Uden said that issues of maintaining bees had never been an issue, but since it had been brought up if the committee would like to see an ordinance drafted the committee certainly could.

Citizen Dawn Steig stated that bees are for production of honey and that it makes sense to regulate. She thought some simple training would be good for the public.

Committee Member Erlenbusch thought it would be good to look at and adopt an ordinance that would be user friendly. Because there was not forage on school yards as a source of nectar for the bees having hives near these areas would not present a problem.

Committee Member Uden stated he would investigate this subject further on behalf of the committee. He would contact Mayor Tom Hanel of Billings to obtain a copy of their ordinance and at a future meeting this information can be reviewed by the committee for further action. The committee could then have City Attorney Dan Rice draft an ordinance to be presented to city council. He thanked Jim and Michelle Simpson for attending the meeting and providing their professional input on the subject of beekeeping.

4. Adjournment


****** *Committee Member Erlenbusch moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Committee Member Wilcox and passed unanimously, 4-0.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



John Uden, Chairperson



Linda Wilkins, Recorder