

**LODI CITY COUNCIL
SHIRTSLEEVE SESSION
CARNEGIE FORUM, 305 WEST PINE STREET
TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2012**

A. Roll Call by City Clerk

An Informal Informational Meeting ("Shirtsleeve" Session) of the Lodi City Council was held Tuesday, March 20, 2012, commencing at 7:00 a.m.

Present: Council Member Hansen, Council Member Johnson, Council Member Katzakian, Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi, and Mayor Mounce

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager Bartlam, Deputy City Attorney Magdich, and Assistant City Clerk Robison

B. Topic(s)

B-1 Discuss Gang Crime and Introduce the Police Department's Strategy to Reduce Gang Violence (PD)

City Manager Bartlam introduced the subject matter of gang crime and the Police Department's strategy to reduce gang violence.

Police Chief Mark Helms provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding gang crime and the department's strategy to reduce the violence. Specific topics of discussion included gang overview, reported gang incidents for 2010-2012, gang-related assaults with firearms for 2010-2011, gang-related homicides for 2010-2012, effective gang strategy, goals and objectives, message to gang members, present enforcement model and next steps, intervention, prevention, challenges, multi-agency gang task force, California Gang Reduction, Intervention, and Prevention (Cal-GRIP) grant proposal, and Lodi-GRIP.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Sergeant Bill Alexander stated that most firearms and ammunition are acquired in residential burglaries, a majority of which are subsequently used in crimes in the community.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Sgt. Alexander confirmed that the fear of being arrested has diminished because of the impact on county jails and the quick turn-around rate. Previously, an offender could remain in prison up to a year; however, currently there is typically a 90-day cap. Juvenile Hall is not quite as impacted as the county program, but its turn-around time has also accelerated.

In response to Mayor Mounce, Chief Helms stated the Police Department has had great success in working closely with property owners, particularly those with tenants who are known gang members, and many have taken action on their own versus the need to initiate a code enforcement action. Mayor Mounce commended the owners of the apartment complex where the first murder of the year occurred for taking steps to improve that hot spot, which included the construction of fences, the eviction of a majority of the troublesome tenants, and the requirement of a key for entrance onto the property. Chief Helms added that these relationships are important and cited the efforts that were made with gangs at Heritage School. Police Officers held community meetings and talked with parents about ways to protect kids from gang life.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Chief Helms stated officers work with the school district in identifying kids in gangs, the kids are placed on a behavioral contract, and contact with the

parents is made when appropriate.

In response to Council Member Johnson, Chief Helms confirmed that officers from various jurisdictions communicate regularly and there is a network of investigators, including Dale Miller who returned from retirement to assist the department with crime analysis by sharing information with other communities about trends and events in gang activity.

Mayor Mounce believed that Crimestoppers was key; however, many people are too frightened to speak out, possibly because they are elderly or are non-English speaking. She stressed the importance of getting the word out that anonymous reports can be given to Crimestoppers, to which Chief Helms agreed and stated the department is working to develop relationships and trust within the gang community and neighborhoods so people will come forward with information. The Police Department is working to print literature in Spanish, and the gang hotline and the Crimestoppers rewards are also resources.

Council Member Johnson added that citizens hearing this message about anonymous tips, the hotline, and help from the community directly from police officers is highly effective.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Chief Helms stated there are still school resource officers but the Crimestoppers program is not currently being done in the schools.

Mayor Pro Tempore Nakanishi believed that more emphasis should be placed on parent responsibility in teaching kids about gangs.

Council Member Hansen stressed the importance of maintaining the school resource officer program even in light of difficult budget times. He pointed out that the school district pays for two of the officers.

Mayor Mounce referred to an article from the San Joaquin Partnership that reported on an internship program created by the City of Tracy, which works to get young people involved with businesses and helps with potential job placement. This would be a great opportunity for the Chamber of Commerce and would help keep youth out of trouble by exposing them to future opportunities they may not have had otherwise.

Discussion ensued amongst Council Members Johnson and Hansen, Chief Helms, and Mr. Bartlam regarding the potential of the second court in Lodi closing due to budget cuts and how detrimental that would be to the City in terms of cost and inconvenience. Mr. Bartlam assured Council that discussions are routinely occurring with the presiding judge, former Council Member Dave Warner, who fully understands the importance of retaining this court in Lodi. Unfortunately, any cost savings would not be realized by the local courts as it would instead go to the state. Council Member Hansen strongly encouraged his fellow Council Members to discuss this issue with state legislators and aggressively oppose the elimination of the Lodi court.

In response to Council Member Hansen, Captain J. P. Badel confirmed that the City continues to offer bilingual incentive pay; however, the number of officers opting to learn to speak Spanish has greatly decreased.

Council Member Hansen expressed some concern with participating in a task force because many times a stronger effort is devoted to the larger or more problematic communities versus Lodi, to which Chief Helms replied it would be his responsibility to ensure Lodi received its fair share based upon what it puts into the program.

In response to Council Member Johnson, Chief Helms stated that the gang issue in Lodi, as compared to overall criminal activity, is significant because it is occurring with greater frequency,

the level of violence is aggravated, and it is increasingly happening on or near school grounds during the day.

Discussion ensued amongst Council Members Johnson and Hansen, Mayor Mounce, and Chief Helms regarding concentrated efforts in one area of town over another, finding the right balance in addressing community needs, zero tolerance approach, east versus west side divide, past lack of attention on infrastructure, lighting, garbage, and housing on the east side of town, and the need to be proactive instead of reactive.

Mayor Mounce requested an item be brought back for Council consideration regarding the potential creation of a gang alternative program.

In response to Council Member Johnson, Chief Helms confirmed that, should the City be successful in obtaining the Cal-GRIP grant, no new staff would be added, the purpose is to form a street crime team using existing officers pulled out of normal assignments on a part-time basis, and the grant money would be utilized to pay for overtime costs associated with this effort.

Ed Miller questioned what could legal firearm owners do to better prevent firearms from being stolen, to which Chief Helms strongly suggested investing in a safe that cannot be picked up and removed from the premises. Capt. Badel also suggested gun locks.

Doug Cheney spoke in regard to the growing drug problem in Lodi and further suggested that better outreach be done with the Latino and Pakistan communities.

Dave Towne, resident of the east side, expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Lodi Police Department and conveyed frustration with the state and its downsizing of prisons, which is negatively affecting cities.

Adam Cortes spoke in regard to the importance of family, faith, mentors, and the opportunities afforded to people to change their lives. He believed it is crucial to involve the Hispanic community and address the language barrier in order to begin to see change. He experienced the opportunity to change his life firsthand and is willing to help others also realize this chance.

Mayor Mounce expressed hope that Mr. Cortes would become involved should the Council create a gang alternative program.

Tony Amador commended the Chief for creating a balanced approach to this challenge, offered his assistance, and suggested service clubs, community based organizations, and the Latino community be involved in this effort, particularly in the creation of bilingual programs.

C. Comments by Public on Non-Agenda Items

None.

D. Adjournment

No action was taken by the City Council. The meeting was adjourned at 8:38 a.m.

ATTEST:

Jennifer M. Robison
Assistant City Clerk