



**City of Chicopee
City Council
Public Safety Committee**

Members

Robert J. Zygarowski, Chair
Frank Laflamme, Vice Chair
Jerry Roy
Gary Labrie
Shane Brooks

APPROVED

**MINUTES
October 16, 2019**

The following are the minutes of a public hearing held Wednesday, October 16, 2019 at 6:30 PM in the Senior Center, 5 West Main Street, Small Garden Room.

Members Present Zygarowski, Laflamme, Labrie

Not Present Roy, Brooks

Also Present Councilor Dobosz, Dan Garvey (Associate City Solicitor), William Jebb (Chief of Police), Michael Wilk (Public Information Officer), Captain Watson (Police Department), Jim Wilson (Regional Director of Walmart, Security-Consulting-Investigations, retired Law Enforcement), Dennis Fagon (Northeast Regional Manager, Security-Consulting-Investigations-retired New York City Police Department), Christopher Buchanan (Public Affairs and Gov't Relations Walmart), Christopher Sacramone (Market Asset Protection Manager Walmart 156), Katrina Ward (Store Manager Walmart)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM

In compliance with the Open Meeting Law the Chairman asked if anyone in the audience was recording the meeting. Hearing none the meeting continued.

ITEM #1

BE IT ORDERED THAT the Public Safety Committee meet to discuss the ongoing security and safety issues at Walmart.

Katrina Ward, store manager Walmart, stated that she is often in touch with Officer Wilk and she has updated him on the security company. She stated it went into fruition a few weeks ago.

Officer Wilk stated that he was contacted by Ed Harnett and that his firm was now handling security inside and outside of Walmart. He stated that they would have a uniformed security guard inside and outside. He stated that Ed Harnett is a retired New York Police Department Deputy Chief.

Officer Wilk stated he ran calls today and there have been twenty five calls since October 1, 2019 with shoplifting, larceny, suspicious people, Identity theft, traffic complaints, and disturbance. He stated that he took out crashes and medical calls.

Katrina Ward stated that anything that is not a felony we can present it at the courthouse once a week. She stated that this would keep your officers on the streets and limit the amount of calls to our store for responding. She stated that the majority of their calls are the shoplifting calls.

Chief Jebb stated he would like to sit down with their security company outside of this meeting and have an understanding of how they are going to operate. His concerns are; will they actively contain, stop or pursue shoplifters. He stated that in the past he has been informed that Walmart's policy is hands off approach.

Christopher Sacramone Market Asset Protection Manager, Market 156 stated that on simple larcenies they wanted to approach the courts with prosecute and it will eliminate those nuisance calls. He stated that we are installing a gatekeeper so the shopping carts will not disappear off the lot.

Chris Buchanan stated that he would like to apologize for any miscommunication. We are here tonight and we want to be responsible to the community.

Councilor Laflamme stated that you have had twenty five calls since October 1, 2019 and your security system was put in place two weeks ago. He stated that this concerns him.

Chief Jebb had concerns about their policy. He stated that you will have people in uniform that are not going to be armed and he doesn't know what kind of training they have. He stated that these things concern him and he would like to sit down with security. He stated that we have worked with Walmart in the past and we put another cruiser up in that area to alleviate some of the issues. He stated he would like to see their plan and work together to resolve this issue we're having.

Chief Jebb stated that he would like to give them a couple of months to see if this implementation of security changes what's occurring here today. He stated if Walmart can seek their own complaints on shoplifting without our interaction, which will free up some of the cruisers.

Councilor Laflamme stated that he agrees we re-visit this in three months to see how you're doing.

Councilor Dobosz stated that he is glad to see that so many are here from Walmart tonight. He asked what the policy is for the parking lot. He sees a lot of trucks, trailers, abandoned vehicles and overnight trucks parked behind Walmart.

Katrina Ward stated that they have one hundred percent addressed the parking issue. She stated that we have a relationship with Interstate Towing and we tow the vehicles. She stated that we have one hundred percent backing with the Chicopee Police Department.

Chief Jebb confirmed that they are working together to keep the trucks, trailers, abandoned vehicles and overnight trucks out of the parking lot.

Katrina Ward stated that tractor trailers bring in a lot of things to the community that none of us like. She stated that the only tractor-trailers that are authorized to park in the parking lot are Walmart tractor-trailers. She stated that there are signs posted and it is enforced

Councilor Dobosz stated that he has been told that Katrina Ward is the best Manager community wise. He stated that he is in favor of waiting a few months to see how their security plan is going to work. If it does not work he would feel more comfortable having a Police Officer there that is trained and under the direction of our Chief of Police. He stated that the Chicopee Walmart is one of the most highest for responses in the country.

Public Input

Daniel Hackett 43 Slate Road stated that he has had problems with Walmart for the last five years. He stated that Katrina Ward is the only Manager to work with the neighborhood.

Councilor Laflamme stated that the storage trailers that are parked in the back are taking up one of the driving lanes. The road is very narrow and it's unsafe.

Katrina Ward stated that we are working with American Leasing and they are going to move them.

Councilor Zygarowski asked who is responsible for the stop signs at Walmart.

Katrina Ward stated the DOT. She stated that the DOT told her she had to remove them coming off from Memorial Drive. She stated that since they have been removed it's very dangerous for the PVRTA to unload their bus. She stated that she would be fined if the signs were not removed. She stated that she will replace the stop sign in the back of Walmart.

Councilor Labrie stated the shopping cart system that would lock the wheels is not in place yet.

Katrina Ward stated that she is in contract with the DPW and they retrieve the carts with us. She stated that two days ago the gate system started to be installed. It will be installed in about two weeks and you won't see the shopping carts anymore.

Councilor Laflamme stated that we could have a Public Safety hearing with the State about the Walmart stop sign to find out what is the safest way to do this. He stated that he has never seen backing up on Memorial Drive because of the stop sign.

Will give 2-3 months to look at

Resident Daniel Hackett – trash picking - very satisfied with new Manager

Councilor Laflamme motion to place on file – Councilor Labrie 2nd the motion – motion passed

Committee vote 3 – 0 favorable

Councilor Laflamme motion to take Item #2 out of order – Councilor Labrie 2nd the motion – motion passed

ITEM #2

Communication from Captain Eric Watson of the Police Department regarding the US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance Grant in the amount of \$23,641.

Captain Eric Watson was present he gave a brief summary on the grant. He stated it is used for surveillance videos, additional patrol rifles, speed lasers, weapons, ammunition, and technology.

Captain Watson gave a brief summary on the entire grant

Councilor Laflamme motion to place on file – Councilor Labrie 2nd the motion – motion passed

Committee vote 3 – 0 favorable

ITEM #3

Councilor Laflamme motion to approve the minutes of September 16, 2019 – Councilor Zygarowski 2nd the motion – motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM