

CITY OF VERONA
PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELFARE COMMITTEE
MINUTES
February 28, 2022

1. Call to order: Reekie called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.
2. Roll Call: Heather Reekie, Evan Touchett, and Phil Hoechst were present. Also present: City Administrator Adam Sayre, Police Chief Bernie Coughlin, Sergeant Jesse Christensen, City Clerk Holly Licht, City Attorney Bryan Kleinmaier, and Public Works Director Theran Jacobson.
3. Public Comments
 - Rye Kimmett, 692 Aspen Ave., spoke in support of decriminalizing drugs. She stated that drug arrests have spiked in the past the few years. She added that while minorities make up less than 10% of Verona's population, over 50% of drug arrests are of people of color.
 - Jamie William, 1171 Canterbury Pass, spoke in support of decriminalizing of drugs.
 - Mara Helmke, 460 Daisy Ct., stated that she was interested investigating lessening the fines for marijuana.
 - Kate Cronin, 204 N Shuman St., stated that she would like the committee to take a look at the parking surrounding the middle school. She added the homes in that area are older and have short driveways and small garages, and they could use more street parking.
 - Resident at 314 S. Main, would like to support the decriminalization of marijuana.
4. Approval of Minutes from the January 14, 2022 Public Safety and Welfare Committee meeting.

Motion by Touchett, seconded by Hoechst to approve the January 14, 2022 Public Safety and Welfare Committee minutes with the correction of the spelling of Christensen. Motion carried 3-0.

5. Discussion and Possible Action Re: A Special Event Permit application from Stacey Burkart, Verona Area Public Library Director, for the Word on the Street 5k Run/Walk on Saturday, April 30, 2022

Sergeant Christensen stated that there are no changes in the route from previous years. He said the biggest concern was the intersection of W. Verona Ave. and Franklin St.; there will be an officer at the intersection for safety.

Motion by Reekie, seconded by Hoechst to approve A Special Event Permit application from Stacey Burkart, Verona Area Public Library Director, for the Word on the Street 5k Run/Walk on Saturday, April 30, 2022. Motion carried 3-0.

6. Discussion and Possible Action Re: A Special Event Permit application from Lauren Birkel, Glacier Edge Elementary PTO, for the Glacier Edge Color Run on Wednesday, May 4, 2022

Christensen stated that the event is held on the sidewalk. There will be several volunteers to assist students in crossing the street. An application was also submitted to the Parks Department. They will be throwing non-toxic colored powder, that will be cleaned up after.

Motion by Reekie, seconded by Touchett to approve a Special Event Permit application from Lauren Birkel, Glacier Edge Elementary PTO, for the Glacier Edge Color Run on Wednesday, May 4, 2022 contingent upon background check approval and receiving the certificate of insurance. Motion carried 3-0.

7. Discussion Re: Parking issues near Badger Ridge Middle School

Chief Coughlin stated that they started to educate the public last fall of the areas of no parking; they distributed the map provided by the school district when trying to educate people. He added that the afternoon pick-up is much more severe since people are waiting longer to pick up their children. They started issuing warning and citations earlier this year. He added that the parking lot creates queuing problems which backs up onto Main St. Chief stated that since they use both doors 1 and 5, there are 2 routes of traffic crossing and causing backups.

Touchett suggested matching the no parking sides with the alternate –side winter parking rules. Coughlin stated it was probably too confusing.

Chief stated that we should consider increasing parking citations to better deter.

Reekie stated the problem could lessen if more kids rode the bus.

Touchett suggested making some of the streets one-way. Jess Billmeyer stated that Shuman could be one-way in bound and Marietta could be one-way outbound. You would probably have longer waits leaving the school in the morning and turning left onto Main St.

Jacobson stated that they recommended to the school district to have one way traffic in the parking lot. He stated that the biggest problem is the volume of cars.

Reekie stated that the City and the District need to meet to discuss before expending more resources on the problem.

Touchett stated that we should consider the one-way streets, research parking citation fees in other communities, talk with the school, and a potential survey to parents asking if they would use the bus if the boundaries were changed.

8. Discussion Re: Marijuana and drug decriminalization in the City of Verona

Kimmitt stated that criminalizing drugs doesn't make them any safer. She stated that people are still are going to continue using them. She added that when she went door to

door for signatures, decriminalizing marijuana was a topic that was brought up by constituents. She added that drug arrests and citations in the City disproportionately affects people of color and people of color make up a small percentage of the City's population.

Reekie suggested waiting to see what the does regarding marijuana.

Attorney Kleinmaier stated that he doesn't believe the city has power to decriminalize any drugs. The city does have the ability lower the penalty for marijuana possession. Misdemeanors and felonies are not handled by the City; they are handled by the District Attorney. He added if the Common Council decriminalizes drugs, the elected officials could be in violation of their oath,

Sergeant Christensen stated that currently, nothing less than 1 ounce is charged as a crime in Dane County.

Chief Coughlin stated most of what the police department does is reactionary, and drug related arrests are usually secondary.

Touchett said, if anything, the City should lobby at the state level.

Hoechst stated he did not support it.

Reekie stated she needed more information.

Touchett would like to see if how many arrests/tickets are secondary and drill down into the data a little more.

9. Adjournment: Motion by Touchett, seconded by Hoechst to adjourn at 7:07 p.m. Motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Holly Licht, City Clerk