



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, November 02, 2004

Study Session

Item -1

Discussion Concerning Code Compliance Proposal

Staff Contact: Gary Greer

Council Agenda Memo

From: Gary D. Greer, City Administrator

Meeting: November 1st, 2004

Subject: Code Compliance changes

Item #'s: 1

Presenter(s): Kyle Hetrick, Chief of Police

Background

In order to continually improve, organizations must evaluate operations on a regular basis to see where gains can be made in efficiency and effectiveness. This year the City Council approved as one of the goals for the City to “Streamline City Services in order to reduce costs.” With this goal in mind City Administration has been reviewing all areas of the city to evaluate our effectiveness and explore ways to change the way we do things in order to create efficiencies. One area that appeared needing a review was the Code Compliance department. Over the last few months there has been frustration with the procedures, timeliness, and outcome of the operations in this area. To address the policy issues surrounding Code Compliance activities a new ordinance was passed that was more comprehensive and enforceable. At this time, we are conducting a study session to explore the possibility of organizational and operational changes to further enhance the effectiveness of Code Compliance activities

Discussion

This month the Police Department was asked to submit a proposal concerning increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of code enforcement for the City of Grand Island. The Police Department was asked to do this because in most cities this activity is one of the duties of law enforcement. Attached is a proposal that was submitted by the department for the transition of code compliance activities to the Police Department. Police Administration will attend the Study Session and present the proposal for Council review. At the Study Session, the Council is asked to review the proposal, ask any questions and comment on the proposed change.

Recommendation

City Administration recommends that the Mayor and Council review the proposal for possible implementation in order to increase the City’s efficiency and effectiveness

concerning Code Enforcement. Additionally, any comments concerning changes in the proposal are in order. It is the intent of City Administration to bring changes back to a regular Council meeting in the near future to begin the transition of this important department.



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Grand Island Police Department Code Enforcement Transition

Structure

We recommend transferring the code compliance duties to the Grand Island Police Department and incorporate those duties within the present job description of the GIPD Community Service Officer (CSO). Our part-time CSO positions were developed to specifically address those duties that do not require a sworn officer to regulate. They presently work junked, unlicensed, and improperly parked vehicles in our neighborhoods. They are assigned to our impound lot which requires releasing and maintaining abandoned, towed, and confiscated automobiles. They organize and carry out our property and auto auctions. They catalogue the patrol mobile videotapes as well as making copies for patrol supervisors, prosecutors, and the courts. They transport evidence to the crime lab in Lincoln for additional processing. They assist with traffic control and complete required grant generated surveys, among other duties. The code enforcement responsibilities would be a natural addition that would not require a major re-writing of any job description, if at all.

This recommendation is being made after studying the costs and methodology of the existing code compliance apparatus. Our evaluation shows that we could hire 3 to 4 part-time CSO's, double the hours of enforcement to include scheduling their hours during evenings and weekends, and for LESS MONEY that we are presently paying our code compliance officer. The flexibility, coverage, and patrol supervision of the CSO's would enhance code enforcement in our community significantly under this plan.

Cost

The wage paid in Grand Island for code compliance enforcement does not seem commensurate with the duties performed with other communities in our area. The present salary ordinance lists the Code Compliance Officer's wages as \$1127.14 to \$1585.99 bi-weekly. The position's current annual wage tops out at \$41,235.74 plus 16.2% for benefits. The currently vacant Code Compliance Officer position is budgeted at the 7th step of an 8 step pay scale until May of '05 when it would have been eligible to move to step 8. Present costs to the city for the code officer's salary are \$39,272.06 plus benefits for a total of \$45,634.13. The pay-range for our part-time Community Service Officers is \$802.50 to \$1128.86 with no benefits. We can hire 4 twenty-hour CSO's for a cost of \$41,724.80 (a \$3909.33 savings) doubling our present coverage with 80 enforcement hours; we can hire 3 twenty-five-hour CSO's for a cost of \$39,117 (a \$6517.13 savings); or 2 twenty-five-hour CSO's for \$26,078 (a \$19,556.13 savings).



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Cost (continued)

**Comparison Analysis
One Code Compliance Officer versus Part-time Community Service Officers**

Position	Cost	Savings
1 FTE Code Compliance	\$45,634.13	NA
4 PTE 20 hrs CSO	\$41,729.80	\$ 3,909.33
3 PTE 25 hrs CSO	\$39, 117.00	\$ 6,517.13
2 PTE 25 hrs CSO	\$26,078.00	\$19,556.13

We recommend hiring 3 CSO's because it nearly doubles the enforcement hours (40 vs. 75), and gives us much more flexibility in scheduling and better coverage.

There would be a necessity to have 2 additional vehicles. The present code compliance vehicle could be transferred to the police department fleet and we would forgo purchasing motorcycles this fiscal year in lieu of obtaining the second CSO vehicle. The present vehicle budget would not be impacted. There would be approximately \$500.00 initial uniform cost per CSO hired, again; to be absorbed within the present budget.

Space needs are a consideration that we have been dealing with in our facility for many years. For the most part, the CSO's will be in the field, however; wherever there is a computer terminal, whether it's at the Public Safety Center, the police impound lot, the Plum Street Station, the St. Francis off-site or even in a patrol vehicle, the CSO's will have access to entering their data. We will address adequate space for the Code Enforcement department in the new public safety center.

Methodology

We receive many calls at the police department from individuals who have received a letter from our code compliance department inquiring as to why they were sent a notification of a code violation. Though the number is listed on the notification letter informing them to call the number at city hall, many, if not most people assume the code compliance enforcement is a police department function. We are in the dark as to how to help these people. We can only advise them that they must be in violation if they received the letter and we instruct them to call code compliance. More likely than not,



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they get a recorded message because the Code Compliance Officer is in the field doing his or her job. We do not like passing the buck when citizens call the department with an issue. Very often the individual explains that they had no idea that they were in violation and if someone would have knocked on the door, they would have gladly taken care of the infringement.

Having uniformed CSO's approach residents about violations demonstrates to the public a more professional posture which tends to enhance compliance. Having all code compliance duties assigned to the Police Department automatically gives the city an additional 75 pairs of eyes from our sworn personnel who work hand in hand with our Community Service Officers.

Our goal will be to seek compliance, not to see how many violations we can write. Our policy will require a face-to-face, or at the very least, phone contact prior to initiating any referral for prosecution. Police departments are very good at following due process. We will document each contact in our incident-based law enforcement management system allowing every person on the department the ability to check the status of each incident. This will enable one and all on the department to know the standing with every violation and better able to inform the caller on the appropriate remedy.

We will consistently enforce the violation, have a policy in place to assure that consistency, and have direct supervision from a Sergeant who is already assigned the task of overseeing our present Community Service Officers. This Sergeant also has the responsibility of directing the Problem Resolution Team where repeated code violators eventually funnel.

Training and Recruitment

Our training coordinator has been given the task to develop a training program for our Community Service Officers. We have been fortunate in being able to hire individuals with prior police or regulation experience: a retired GIPD Lieutenant, a retired insurance adjuster, and a corrections officer. Our recruitment efforts will also include seeking bi-lingual individuals who will be able to work in our diverse community. There is an abundance of human resources looking for part-time employment from young people seeking to get started in a career in law enforcement to those on the other end of the spectrum who are retired looking to contribute to the community. We had close to 70 applicants for one part-time Community Service Officer position the last time we advertised an opening.



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In addition to instructing on the black and white of the city code regulations and parking regulations, we will focus on “Verbal Judo” skills, policy and procedure, radio procedure, a short Field Training Officer (FTO) program where the new CSO shadows an experienced CSO, and perhaps instruction on chemical defensive weapons (pepper spray for dogs).

Timeline

Once given the “green light” to move forward we would anticipate a 30 to 40 day period to advertise and hire for the positions and approximately two to three weeks of training before passing on their duty assignments. Two months should be sufficient time to transfer the code compliance duties to the police department.

Respectfully Submitted,
Kyle L. Hetrick, Chief of Police
Grand Island Police Department