

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
JOINT COMMITTEE on PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION**

**And ORDINANCE**

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2012**

**6:00 PM**

ATTENDANCE

**Committee on Public Safety and Transportation**

Council members: Lyons, Colon, Taylor-Moye, dePara, Olson, Paoletto

**Committee on Ordinances**

Council members: Paoletto, Blunt, Martinez, Bonney

Council President McCarthy

OTHER(s):

Bridgeport Chief of Police Gaudet; Paul Vallas, Bridgeport Board of Education Superintendent

Co-chair Lyons of the Public Safety Committee called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm.

She introduced the members from both committees.

**Agenda**

**39-11** Proposed Resolution to enforce a curfew for Youth, age sixteen years and younger

Council member Blunt stated that they were there to move the ordinance that is currently on the books forward. He expressed that there was a lot of work to get there. They had meetings with the police chief, community leaders and various organizations. He emphasized that it was important to start off and move the matter forward. He stated

that there must be certain components to move forward. He relayed that the ordinance has been on the books since 1990. He said they were waiting for specific details from the police chief to support the need for the curfew. He further emphasized that the initiative was brought forth by him, but it is also supported by the city council; so it's a joint effort. He asked to hear from Police Chief Gaudet.

Police Chief Gaudet thanked the committee for inviting him to the meeting. He stated that it has been an interesting couple of weeks since the ordinance was brought forth. He noted that they have been working off the ordinance on the books since 1994; however, he expressed that it's a different world. He said they would try to address the curfew issue in 2012, noting that there have been recent court decisions regarding curfews. They also had to determine if imposing a curfew is legally enforceable, so they begin looking at the existing ordinance and he said he would recommend some changes to it. He said they needed to decide what the goal is and he felt the changes could be effective. However, he relayed that it could be very expensive and manned intensive, but he thought those concerns could be addressed. He went on to say that the matter will concern enforcement and change and it will include many partnerships with various agencies, such as: Juvenile Probation, Department of Children & Families, Board of Education, local churches, RYSAP, The Nehemiah Commission and Fairfield Services Woodfield. He stated that additional manpower is a crucial component and the goal is to reduce violent crime by juveniles, with emphasis on changing the behavior of people. He mentioned that truancy and school violations go hand in hand, so any measures used to address one should support the other. He noted that he met with the BOE superintendent and he stressed that finances will need to be considered.

Police Chief Gaudet suggested proposing a six to eight week PILOT with some flexibility through the Mayor or police chief to change the rules as needed. He relayed that placing a curfew on a geographic neighborhood could be considered and in the end, the outcome should result in a good analysis of where they stand. He noted that Brian Dickerson has conducted a lot of research regarding curfews and it was found that it's important to report a good analysis for future reference that should be inclusive of juvenile incidents and any enforcement done. The analysis will also include loitering and the capacity to make trouble while loitering for juveniles and adults.

Council member Paoletto commented that he would let all the speakers' present address the committee first and then the meeting will be open up to committee members.

Paul Vallas stated that he was the interim Superintendent of Schools. He stated that they had two good meetings with the police department and he anticipated a strong working relationship. He relayed that they discussed staggered curfew hours and he noted that there are some cost effective measures they can implement to improve public safety. On the issue of curfew, he said it has always been supported by him. He said he would like to see a curfew set for anyone under the age of 18 years old. He spoke about including a curfew to include loitering; i.e., anyone on the street after a certain hour will be picked up. He stressed that sometimes just the threat of being picked up can serve as a deterrent. He said he felt they should begin with a PILOT for two plus months. He emphasized the importance of relaying to parents that their child should be home at a reasonable hour and they should assure that they get enough sleep. Overall, his feeling was that it's important for a parent to know where their child(ren) are and that they are safe and sound during the day and night. He stressed that a parent(s) needs to take a more active role in their child's life. He further felt that the inconvenience of a parent having to pick their child up could also serve as a deterrent. He mentioned that they plan to get the word out to make sure that parents do their part so the police can do their job easier.

Council member Paoletto clarified that they were acting as one committee tonight, so double votes wouldn't be required. He further clarified that they weren't proceeding tonight with the ordinance and that they were there to answer questions and hear information. He said they would order a public hearing prior to the next city council meeting to keep the item moving forward.

Council member dePara stated that there would be difficult relationships and partnerships to be built. He mentioned that he particularly liked the idea of getting the word out to parents. He recalled an old commercial that came on television at a certain time that posed the question "*Do you know where your kids are?*" He said a social media campaign could be started in schools to help move the matter forward, because he thought the matter pertained to an entire holistic approach.

Council member dePara asked Police Chief Gaudet how the PILOT program would work. Police Chief Gaudet relayed the following recommendations: a) a hot spot analysis will be conducted for juveniles b) they will record dedicated detail and keep accurate records c) there will be liaison with social service agencies to track any crisis related to a juvenile d) they will place more focus on parties attended by youth

Council member dePara commented that despite the tragedies that have occurred recently, something good could come out of the circumstances surrounding the incidents.

Superintendent Vallas mentioned that the party hot spots should be a focus, because many of the retaliations occur at these types of gatherings. He stressed that as long as the police aren't pressured to come up with additional numbers, the PILOT could be effective, but they don't want to give the police department any additional burden.

Police Chief Gaudet added that they will also need some follow up work done and that's where the agencies will come in to make referrals and other recommendations required to help change the behavior of a juvenile.

Council member dePara asked if school based security officers would work closely with the police. Superintendent Vallas said that is part of their effort to collaborate with them.

Co-chair Lyons relayed that this meeting is to explore what they can expand upon and work on.

Council member Martinez stated that the talk about the curfew scares some people. She stated that she has done some research in other towns regarding the issue of curfew and she found that there haven't been any problems. She expressed that she didn't feel the word "curfew" should be scary, because it can be effective. She recalled when a curfew was proposed in the past and it was met with some opposition. She expressed that she was glad to see that people are willing to work with them and she also felt that making use of the media; such as radio and television could be very helpful in promoting support for the ordinance. She said it was important that the curfew doesn't turn into a profiling situation and the matter should remain strictly a curfew issue. She further stated that she spoke to some of the churches who are willing to work with the city council. She expressed that she hoped they are able to accomplish what they need to.

Council President McCarthy thanked Council member Blunt for leading the charge and bringing the ordinance forward. He recalled the tragedy of the 14 year old that was killed and he relayed that the answer will never be just a curfew. He said the matter also consists parent involvement, police intervention and social service agencies. He thanked everyone for stepping up to address the problem and come up with possible solutions.

Council member Olson stated that chiefs of police across the country have agreed that gun control has its challenges. He questioned what could be done to help the very young kids when it comes to guns. He relayed that some thinking needs to be done on a long term basis to find ways to communicate with the kids about the lethal aspects of a gun. Co-chair Lyons interjected to ask Council member Olson to stay on the subject of the curfew at this time.

Council member Taylor-Moye stated that it was good the ordinance was brought forth to help kids and their parents. And she thanked the agencies that were present tonight for getting involved. She stressed that some have a fear about the potential of profiling in designated areas in the city; so she doesn't want to see the matter become a profiling issue. However, she said she felt strongly that the message needs to get out that they are tired of the violence. She further made the point that there are 14, 15 and 16 year olds that have assumed the role of taking care of their younger siblings when the parents are working etc. She questioned where the youth would be placed if they are taken into custody and a parent doesn't or isn't able to pick them up. Police Chief Gaudet responded that he would like to have that type of commitment from DCF to ask them to take custody of the child, with the hope of handling the matter in a minimum number of hours.

Council member Colon asked about any special training that will be offered for police officers prior to the PILOT beginning. Police Chief Gaudet said they have plans for training and they are drafting a one sheet instruction page for the officer's reference on how to handle the curfew issue.

Council member Colon mentioned the program to buy back guns. The response was that the program was hugely successful in the past to get guns off the street, but there aren't any hard numbers available to support that. Council member Colon noted that the city council was looking into finding additional funds to help the cause.

Council member Colon asked about plans for the summer when youth are out of school. Superintendent Vallas stated that there have been discussions about approaching college students that are majoring in education to run summer programs. He relayed that there are plans to have a robust summer program this year. He further relayed that they need a longer school year. He commented that the longer a child is out of school, it affects their learning potential.

Council member Bonney stated that he has heard over and over about a parent being accountable. He said he observed what was missing tonight was an organization present to represent the parents. He mentioned a great organization named The City of Bridgeport

P.A.C.K. and he felt it would be good to have someone from the group attend a future discussion. Superintendent Vallas responded that the organization supports the ordinance. He stated that if the curfew is going to be implemented, he felt they should be involved.

Council member dePara stated that another group at the table should be youth representatives. He said he thought it would be important to find out their safety concerns and what things they would like in the summer programs and also to get other input from them that may help curb the problem.

Police Chief Gaudet suggested the Young Adult Police Commissioners be invited to a future meeting. Council member dePara said that would be good, but he clarified that he was looking for input from the regular high school student to gain their perspective.

Janice Anderson, RYSAP stated that they had some students in the program that may be interested in attending a discussion at a future meeting. She added that they could also submit some survey data regarding youth issues. Council member dePara agreed that information would be helpful.

Council member Martinez stated that they also need to address what's available for after school and what safe places are offered for youth during the evening.

Police Chief Gaudet said they have plans to go into a neighborhood and engage the parents and youth; his feeling was that they will be able to tell a story from a victim's point of view. There are plans to do some outreach and hold forums to address youth violence. He felt it will be important to make a connection between youth and various agencies.

Council member Paoletto agreed that parent involvement is important as well as youth involvement. However, he thought they should keep the matter into perspective, noting that all the ills of society won't be solved through the two committees. He recalled that there was an ordinance on the books, but the parents and the youth have to take ownership of the problem. He further commented that hopefully, through the tragedy people will be enlightened and they can steer youth in the right direction. He said better advertising may be needed to promote the youth programs that are out there. He thanked everyone for their time and energy given to the matter to date.

Co-chair Lyons thanked Council member Blunt and the other council members present. She further thanked Police Chief Gaudet and Superintendent Vallas. She expressed that this was a matter of everyone getting together with the various agencies and

discussing what will work. She said it was crucial to be sensitive to everyone's needs and the plan is to work together. She stressed that it was important to keep to the matter of the curfew only and address what can be done to make the ordinance effective and successful. She said they needed to maintain that focus.

Council member Blunt thanked everyone for being present tonight; inclusive of Police Chief Gaudet, Superintendent Vallas and the agencies. He expressed that the work will be a shared responsibility and together they can make the ordinance work. He relayed that he has heard support from youth and parents and he said he was sure they would hear more during the public hearing. He emphasized that the curfew is not a solution, but it's an attempt to keep kids out of the criminal system by redirecting them and providing them with the necessary support to get them on the right track. He said the committees will continue to do due diligence to put the components of the ordinance in place to proceed in an effective manner. He said they will proceed with an open mind to assess the different levels at different times. He commented that they will have to deal with what's contained in the language. Overall, he stated that at least the matter has raised the consciousness of the police department and the parents.

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO SCHEDULE A PUBLIC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 6, 2011 AT 6:00 PM PRIOR TO THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER BONNEY SECONDED**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

## ADJOURNMENT

**\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO MOVED TO ADJOURN  
\*\* COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED  
\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Graham  
Telesco Secretarial Services