Committee Members Present:
District 65: Board Members Jerome Summers and Kim Weaver
District 202: Superintendent Eric Witherspoon, Board members Gretchen Livingston and Deborah Graham
City of Evanston: Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Alderman Mark Tendam, Alderman Jane Grover, City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz
Staff Present: Bill Stafford, Chief Richard Eddington, Doug Gaynor, Matt Swentkofske, Kate Todd
Others Present: David Blat and Anna Heling

Alderman Grover called the meeting to order at 5:40 pm. Introductions were made. The May 19, 2011 minutes were approved as submitted.

City Manager Wally Bobkiewicz reported on the City’s Youth Services programs, noting that the Mayor’s Safe Summer Initiative was a great success. The Safe Summer program partnered with D65, D202 and numerous Evanston not-for-profit organizations. The roller skating and free beach tokens were especially well appreciated. Roller skating continues to be offered during the school year at the Levy, Fleetwood-Jourdain, and Chandler Centers.

Bobkiewicz stated that the City Council has directed staff to enhance and expand the Safe Summer program, and as a result the FY2012 City Budget includes an additional $50,000 to create a Youth Division in the Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department. The Mayor’s Youth Task Force has also expanded and continues to meet at ETHS. Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department Doug Gaynor promised to send his report on the Safe Summer program to Committee members.

Further discussion focused on programs for at-risk youth in the 18-25 year age group. Bobkiewicz stated that feedback regarding City programs indicated a need to revamp and expand programs for this age group. This is still a “work in progress” and will require hiring additional City staff, while continuing to work with ETHS and the Youth Job Center on youth employment issues. Bobkiewicz promised to keep the Committee advised as the program evolves.
Bobkiewicz addressed the economic development issues on the Committee agenda. The City is working on a NEA grant which will look at uses for the Varsity Theater among other Sherman Avenue issues. The City is also in conversation with various arts organizations (Piven, Next, Evanston Art Center, etc.) regarding the future use of the Noyes Art Center and the Evanston Art Center space. The City wants to be as supportive of Evanston’s art community as possible. Committee members were very supportive of developing the Varsity Theater space.

Regarding a question about Boocoo, Bobkiewicz said that the City will do all it can to assist the owners to keep the space open.

Regarding the City’s former Recycling Center, Bobkiewicz explained that after a task force appointed by Mayor Tisdahl had met and proposed three possible future uses for the land and building, the City Council approved the option of leasing the space to a consortium of Evanston sports teams (baseball, softball, and soccer) to be used for indoor practice space. City staff are working with the interested sports organizations and hope to have a proposal ready for review in early 2012.

The Committee has also received support from Northwestern University Provost Daniel Linzer in agreeing to appoint Mike Ellis from the Provost’s office to attend future meetings of the City-School Liaison Committee. It was also suggested that Eve Lederhouse of the Evanston Chamber of Commerce be invited to the February City-School Committee meeting.

Issues regarding youth violence were addressed by Chief Eddington, who reported that serious crime is down, despite what had been expected last spring. The Chief said this was due in part to the Safe Summer Initiative. He also reported that communication between ETHS and the Evanston Police Department (EPD) has a long and positive history. Reports are sent daily to the ETHS Security office. The Chief stated that most kids who are picked up end up being sent home with parents. However, violent crimes are handled differently, when statutes, state’s attorneys, and courts are involved. There seems to be a lull in gang activity at this time.

The Committee discussed the return of ex-offenders to the community. The Mayor noted that a program at Fleetwood-Jourdain exists to help them start their own businesses with planning assistance and micro-loans from a Northwestern University Kellogg program.

Committee members expressed concern about levels of drug/alcohol abuse in the Evanston community. Chief Eddington explained that there needs to be proximity of the punishment to the offense; an immediate ticket with no criminal record makes this possible. Regarding alcohol, the Police work closely with both Northwestern police and ETHS security; they have a multi-pronged approach.

Discussion followed regarding the Mayor’s proposed marijuana ordinance, which provides that individuals arrested with less than 10 grams of marijuana would be issued
a ticket and fined. This will hopefully allow more youths to enter the workforce after high school without a criminal record holding them back. The proposed ordinance will be presented at the November 7, 2011, Human Services Committee meeting. Regarding the marijuana ordinance, committee members wished to see more research and information gathering, in particular from PEER Services and ETHS social workers and substance abuse counselors.

Committee members requested more information about bullying in schools. Chief Eddington will check with School Resource officers and report back at the next meeting. Chief Eddington also provided information about the police response regarding stolen cell phones at ETHS.

Superintendent Witherspoon reminded committee members of the November 3 Legislative Task Force meeting at ETHS. Attendees will include Representatives Gabel and Biss and Sen. Schoenberg.

Alderman Grover passed out the Evanston 150 list of great ideas. Alderman Grover also suggested that committee members subscribe to the online newsletters from each another. There will be a renewed effort at distracted driving enforcement.

Superintendent Witherspoon mentioned that ETHS now has live streaming of its Board meetings.

The committee would like to discuss homelessness at a future meeting, specifically looking at a shortage of housing for homeless in Evanston and what the City is doing to address homelessness. Statistics were provided that 241 ETHS students are homeless. Truancy increases for homeless students. 40% of ETHS students are on the free or reduced lunch program.

The committee also asked to revisit the “Safe Routes to School” project at its next meeting.

Future meetings:
   Thursday, February 16, 2012, 5:30 p.m. – District 202
   Thursday, May 17, 2012, 5:30 p.m. – District 65

Respectfully submitted by Kate Todd
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