

Introduction

One of the remarkable benefits of living in the Village is our public safety services. Even though we have only slightly more than 700 homes, we have our own locally controlled police force (including eight officers patrolling our streets) and our own 24/7 communications center.

As a community, we greatly benefit not just from having these outstanding public safety resources devoted to protecting us 24/7, but also from having community control over these resources. These benefits are particularly important to us when, as now, there is a heightened incidence of crime in our general region.

This protection and the peace of mind it provides is not inexpensive. Roughly 36% of the Village's operating budget for next year -- some \$1.58 million -- is devoted to the police force and communications center.

Topics for tonight:

1. **Public Safety Committee** -- Our Committee serves as a citizens advisory board to the Board of Managers and to the Chief. We also serve as a liaison to the Bethesda District of the Montgomery County Police.

Our members are: Margot Anderson, Ollie Davidson; Kay Efron, Irwin Pernick, Lisa Sanders, Betty O'Connor, John Talbott, and James Anderson.

We have been busier this year than most years on two fronts -- one relating to the Chief and the other pertaining to the budget.

2. **Selection and Orientation of Chief Fitzgerald** -- Our committee was actively involved in the Chief's selection and his orientation to the Village. The bottom line is that we are fortunate to have an outstanding new Chief, and he is off to a very quick and productive start. Our Committee will be continuing to meet periodically with the Chief to discuss public safety priorities and issues.

3. **Budget Issues** -- During this year's budget cycle, all aspects of the Village's expenditures came under close scrutiny. Public safety was no exception. Our Committee was asked about a number of options for reducing the public safety budget, and we made our recommendations to the Board and Budget Committee. We are very pleased with the outcome. The Board and Budget Committee have been able to achieve significant savings in next year's budget on public safety expenditures and, significantly, have done so without compromising the level of these important services to the Village. This is a terrific outcome for the Village.

4. **Light It and Lock It** -- I would like to wrap up with a point about how we can significantly improve our overall security without any additional expenditures by the Village. I am talking about the security steps we as residents all take (or don't take) with our homes and with our cars. As the crime statistics confirm, we have had a heightened incidence during this past year of burglaries (14 actual or attempted break-ins to homes in the Village) and larcenies (67 actual or attempted break-ins to our cars). Our police force is doing everything it can to prevent these crimes and to catch and prosecute anyone who commits these crimes in the Village. But our police force cannot do it by themselves. Crime prevention is every resident's obligation, and when one of us fails to do our part, that failure creates an opportunity for criminals to commit crime affecting the larger neighborhood. In other words, good security habits on the individual level benefit the larger community, and bad habits put the larger community at risk.

Our Committee, with the Chief's assistance, prepared a set of "Light It Up & Lock It Up!" Guidelines this year. You can find them on the Village's website and we have some copies on the table outside the meeting room.

In brief, we are asking each of you:

- a. Light up your house. Specifically, every home should have two exterior lights (one in the front and one in the rear) turned on through all hours of darkness.
- b. Lock up your house. Doors and windows should be locked—not just at night and when you are away from home, but at all times.
- c. Lock up your car. Never leave your vehicle unattended with the engine running, and always lock your car when you park. Additionally, all valuables should either be removed from your car (this is preferable), or at a minimum, valuables—and any related accessories—should be completely hidden from view.

Call the police immediately when you see or hear anything suspicious. Residents are sometimes reluctant to call the police (or delay calling) for various reasons. Our police department wants to hear from you right away when something happens so that they can respond and investigate whatever you've seen or heard. A successful night of property crime emboldens the thieves to come back to the Village and commit their crimes again. Call the police. That's what they're here for. For emergencies, call 911. For anything else (including any suspicious activity), call the Communications Center at (301) 654-7300.