



Legislation Text

File #: ORD-3502, Version: 1

Consider adopting Ordinance No. 3502 approving the dissolution of the Community Watch Committee; and take appropriate action.

BACKGROUND:

The original Neighborhood Crime Watch Program began in the United States in 1972 with the funding of a federal grant through the Bureau of Justices Assistance, Office of Justice Programs. The program was initiated as an effort to encourage citizens to organize their neighborhoods to assist law enforcement in identifying criminal behavior during an era of increased crime in the United States.

It is unknown when Farmers Branch actually began participating in the in the original program. However, in April of 2000 the City Council passed Resolution No. 2000-068 that created a focus group to reorganize the existing program and changed the name to Community Watch. The Council also appointed a committee to serve staggered terms. The charge of the Committee was to promote a sense of community spirit by promoting neighborhood safety. In 2006, in response to the “Branch Revitalization Task Force”, the Council added educating the public on code enforcement issues to their list of responsibilities.

The program has struggled to maintain relevance over the past decade, despite the best efforts of dedicated citizens who have been appointed to the Committee. Their efforts to identify and appoint neighborhood block captains to carry out the mission of the program has remained difficult and unfruitful despite vigorous community engagement efforts. This is most likely the result of several factors, to include, relatively low crime rates and a general shift in society in the use of technology to obtain information. Additionally, the police department created a Crime Prevention position in 2016 that is a liaison to the community in all matters of education and training associated with crime prevention. This fiscal year alone, the police department has participated in fifty- six speaking/training engagements in the community. The police department also utilizes social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Citizen Observer (Tip411) and most recently Nextdoor, to keep the community informed and educated on crime trends and tips to help keep our community safe.

RECOMMENDATION:

City Administration is confident that the citizens of Farmers Branch have multiple venues to remain engaged and informed regarding public safety matters. Using a good mix of social media and in-person engagement activities, such as Coffee with a Cop and National Night Out, we are confident that that our citizens will remain engaged and informed as to matters of public safety. Should a neighborhood desire to continue in the traditional Community Watch program, the police department can most certainly facilitate the process through our Crime Prevention Officer. Therefore, we recommend Council adopt Ordinance No. 3502 abolishing the Community Watch Committee.

POSSIBLE COUNCIL ACTION:

1. I move to approve Ordinance No. 3502.
2. I move to approve Ordinance No. 3502, with modifications.

3. I move to table the issue for further study or take no action.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Ordinance No. 3502