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MINUTES
ROCKWALL CITY COUNCIL
TOWN HALL MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2016 - 7:00 PM
108 East Washington Street (The Center)

I. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance - Mayor Jim Pruitt

Mayor Pruitt called the meeting to order. He then asked Father George Monaghan from Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church to come forth and deliver the invocation. Mayor Pruitt then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present at the meeting were Mayor Jim Pruitt, Mayor Pro Tem Mike Townsend, and Council Members Dennis Lewis and Kevin Fowler. Also present were City Manager Rick Crowley, Assistant City Managers Mary Smith and Brad Griggs, and various city staff, including Police Chief Kirk Riggs, Assistant Police Chief Kirk Aldridge, Fire Chief Mark Poindexter, Battalion Fire Chief Brett Merritt, and Fire Marshal Ariana Hargrove. Council Members David White, John Hohenshelt and Scott Milder were not in attendance.

II. Welcome by Mayor and City Council

Mayor Pruitt welcomed guests and explained that he has called this meeting in order to encourage open lines of communication between the city and its citizens. He indicated that this meeting will focus only on public safety, not other topics such as trash service, for example. He introduced City Manager Rick Crowley and the public safety staff members. He then called forth Police Chief Kirk Riggs to provide a presentation.

III. Discussion regarding Public Safety in the Community

- A. Police Department - Welcome and overview of community involvement and outreach.
- Communications Division
 - Patrol Division
 - School resource
 - Citizens on Patrol
 - Citizens Police Academy

Chief Riggs addressed the audience on the above listed topics, sharing, in part, that regarding 'best practices' in general, Rockwall the 48th out of 2,800 police departments in the State of Texas to achieve recognized status (a voluntary accreditation program). Chief Riggs went on to explain a little about the structure of the each division within the Police Department (PD) and about some of the programs that the PD hosts, including "Park Talk and Walk," "Smart 9-1-1," "Citizens on Patrol" (which currently has over 40 volunteers), "Rockwall Clergy and Police Partnership," (which is new), and the "Citizens Police Academy." He indicated that a full time detective and full time prosecutor at the County focus on family violence-related crimes. In addition, there will soon be a Rockwall Child Advocacy Center (CAC) to serve as a resource to the community without users of these types of services having to drive to Collin County. Chief Riggs thanked the Rockwall County District Attorney, Kenda Culpepper, for all of her work towards spearheading the efforts involved in establishing a CAC here locally. Chie Riggs went on to explain a little about 9-1-1 dispatching services, indicating that the Rockwall PD Dispatch services the City of Rockwall, Fate and Heath.

53 He also explained that the PD participates in social media, including Facebook and Twitter in an
54 effort to expand communication efforts with the community.

- 55
- 56 B. Fire Department - Welcome and overview of community involvement and outreach.
- 57 • Inspections
 - 58 • Volunteer Recruitment
 - 59 • CERT
 - 60 • Citizens Fire Academy
- 61

62 Ariana Hargrove, City of Rockwall Fire Marshal, came forth and introduced herself and her staff.
63 She then went on to explain the various functions of her division, generally explaining that it
64 focuses on promoting fire safety, both for commercial developments and residents. She
65 explained that a large focus of the division is fire-related plan reviews associated with new,
66 commercial development (buildings) in the city. Also, her inspectors perform fire-related safety
67 inspections, including fire sprinklers and fire alarms. She went on to share some about the
68 community outreach programs that fall under her division, such as "CERT" (Community
69 Emergency Response Team), Citizens Fire Academy, Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Program,
70 an Arson Hotline, an Annual Open House, educational school programs within the Rockwall
71 Independent School District (RISD), an Inflatable Fire Safety House, and a Fire Safety Trailer.
72 The trailer, she explained, has a demo room and a mock home to help simulate a fire and a
73 tornado in order to train children on what to do and how to react in these situations. She also
74 briefly touched on an elderly program called "Remember When," a Sesame Street (daycare)
75 curriculum, social media outreach, fire extinguisher training, and partnerships with other
76 organizations in the community (i.e. Meals on Wheels, Boys and Girls Club). She spoke briefly
77 about a new program that will focus on community risk reduction for both businesses and
78 residents. She went on to explain that her division may be contacted online via the city's
79 website, by phone or by email. She also pointed out that any complaints or concerns may be
80 submitted anonymously online or by email.

81

82 Fire Chief Mark Poindexter came forward next and introduced himself, explaining, in part, that
83 he has lived in the community his whole life, including attending high school here. He then
84 went on to explain the FD's vision, mission and goals. He pointed out that most of the
85 firefighters in our city are volunteers, and supplement by limited, paid FD staff. He shared that
86 there are currently four fire stations located within the City of Rockwall. Chief Poindexter then
87 went on to explain a little about the various functions of the department. He shared details
88 pertaining to some of the functions of the Operations Division, such as Fire suppression,
89 extrication rescue, high angle rescue, below grade rescue, swift water rescue, rescue/recovery
90 scuba diving, hazmat response, emergency management assistance, Citizens Fire Academy, a
91 home smoke alarm battery replacement program, etc. He spoke some about the various special
92 events in which the FD annually participates (i.e. Founders Day, 4th of July, Concerts by the
93 Lake, Chamber of Commerce events, fire station tours, TX Night Out, CASA car show, local
94 parades, RISD events, etc.). He then went on to share some details related to personnel,
95 including the city's 18 full time fire staff, 19 part time staff, and 29 volunteers. Of the 48 part-
96 time / volunteers, 24 are paid, full-time career firefighters in other, neighboring cities.

97

98 He explained that the FD does not run its own ambulance (EMS) calls, but it does work closely
99 with the current, countywide provider (Rockwall County EMS). Based on 2015 personnel costs
100 and budget, he explained that volunteer firefighters help save tax payers within the city over
101 \$5,963,227.16 / annually (which equates to 15.45 cents per \$100 of assessed value. On a
102 \$200,000 piece of property, this equates to a savings of more than \$309.01 / year to tax payer.
103 Chief Poindexter explained that, with a full time fire department, the operating budget would be
104 \$9,085,263.16. He went on to thank the FD staff and volunteers for all they do. He also thanked

105 the Police Department for the 9-1-1 dispatching services it provides to the FD and to the
106 community.

107
18 **IV. Hold round table discussions with the community regarding Public Safety.**

109
110 **Mayor Pruitt came forth and asked the chiefs and the fire marshal to come to the front of the**
111 **room and prepare to hear and respond to comments from members of the public in the**
112 **audience this evening.**

113
114 **Richard Taylor**
115 **2559 Abbey Court**
116 **Rockwall, TX**

117
118 **Mr. Taylor indicated that he is a retired Houston Fire Investigator. Mr. Taylor, after introducing**
119 **himself and sharing some of his fire-related credentials, he shared that several years ago he**
120 **approached the City Council encouraging the city to consider at least staffing one, full-time fire**
121 **company in each station within the city. He also shared his perspectives regarding the**
122 **importance of having "first responders" staffed and available to the public for dispatch and use**
123 **in emergency situations. He indicated that he would gladly pay the \$300 extra dollars / year to**
124 **have proper staffing and ensure a first responder is there, on scene, if / when they are truly**
125 **needed.**

126
127 **Chief Poindexter shared that the city is looking into the possibility of providing limited "first**
128 **responder" capabilities / response moving forward. He explained some details pertaining to**
129 **ambulance services**

130
131 **Beau Jackson**
132 **1277 Waters Edge Drive (Caruth Lakes)**
133 **Rockwall, TX**

134
135 **Mr. Jackson explained that he is a firefighter in another city within the City of Lancaster, but he**
136 **lives in the City of Rockwall. He indicated that he is a concerned citizen, especially pertaining**
137 **to the fire department. Mr. Jackson explained that there is a \$10 million dollar operational**
138 **budget for the police department, but there is only a \$3 million dollar budget for the city's fire**
139 **department. He explained the importance of paid firefighters, including training together and**
140 **ensuring proper and expedient responses to fire calls within the city. He also suggested that**
141 **the City of Rockwall should be working in conjunction with the EMS company to provide "first**
142 **responder" type services. Mr. Jackson provided various compliments to the city staff, the city**
143 **council and city departments, including the Police and Fire Departments. Mr. Jackson**
144 **generally and strongly encouraged the city to take a very close and serious look at adding**
145 **additional, paid fire staff. Mr. Jackson also encouraged the city to look into the SAFER Grant.**
146 **He pointed out that the Fire Marshal has indicated that fires are occurring in restaurants and**
147 **commercial establishments within the city. He believes it would be difficult for seven**
148 **firefighters to work a residential structure fire, and he does not even want to think about the**
149 **difficulty that they might have fighting a fire at a restaurant or other commercial building.**
150 **Although he understands that those types of buildings have fire suppression systems, fires**
151 **there could still pose major challenges. Mr. Jackson went on to suggest that the Fire**
152 **Department should be brought "up to par" and have funding that matches that of the city's**
153 **Police Department.**

154
155 **Matt Ward**
156 **327 Shepherds Hill Drive**
157 **(No city name provided)**

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Mr. Ward asked Rockwall County EMS (co)owner, Mitch Ownby, who was present at the meeting in the audience, for more information regarding how many ambulances are fully staffed within the city, 24 hours per day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. He wanted to know information on the average response times. Mayor Pruitt indicated that he serves on the board of the Emergency Services Corporation, and there are different response times, per contract, that are “urban” and “rural.” Mr. Ownby indicated that the EMS company currently has three stations that are staffed 24 hours/day. The City of Rockwall has an average response time of 4:30 minutes. Furthermore, Mr. Ownby shared that they are 95%, on average, below the 8:00 minute response time standard within the city.

**Robert Hurd
2908 Panhandle Drive
Rockwall, TX**

Mr. Hurd stated that he has been a Rockwall resident for about eight years. He indicated that he is very thankful for those who serve our community and understands that they make very difficult, sometimes life or death decisions, on a daily basis. He shared that he used to serve in the military. He is here to talk about a traffic stop that his young son was recently involved in because he does not want this city to become like a lot of things elsewhere that he sees on TV. He explained that he is a person of color, and so are his boys. He shared that his son was pulled over about a month ago because he did not use a turn signal. He and his vehicle were then searched (by a dog and by staff), and an hour-and-a-half later, he was let go. He generally felt that this one interaction that his son had with the police department may have reversed twenty or so years of a viewpoint he described as a “love of the law and of police” that his son may have held regarding the police department prior to the traffic stop having happened. He is encouraged by the outreach programs already in place but expressed he would love to see the city consider more programs, specifically for high school students and young adults, related to the police department. He would also like to learn what he can do to better support law enforcement and the community.

**Dennis Hillary
143 Pelican Cove Drive
Rockwall, TX**

Mr. Hillary explained they he has been pulled over probably five times over the years. He explained that each time he was pulled over, he had done something wrong, he deserved it, and he did not complain about it.

**Patrice Kapur
1835 Bayhill Drive
Rockwall, TX**

Mrs. Kapur explained that her youngest child had a previous interaction with the Police Department about seven years ago. She indicated that she is married to a South Asian man, but most people mistakenly assume her children are Hispanic. She went on to share a story about her son having been in a park, at night, in a car, with his Hispanic girlfriend. The police came and saw them in the car, mentioning they were probably making out, but her son relayed that he felt as though he was treated like a criminal, even though he was not really doing anything wrong. She explained that her son was 17 years old at the time and had felt like what happened with the interaction with police that night was “out of proportion” based on what the situation was at the time. Mrs. Kapur explained that her son’s car was searched, and he had relayed to her that he had not consented to his car being searched. Mrs. Kapur explained that

211 her son, at the time, relayed that he felt that part of the reason why he was treated the way that
212 he was is because of his skin color; however, she acknowledged the understanding that
213 sometimes things get "over dramatized" when coming from a 17 year old. So, she is not really
214 sure if it truly was such a big deal at the time. She went on to share that her son has now gone
215 through college and is getting a degree in Criminal Justice because he wants to be a police
216 officer. She explained that now that her son is grown, she recently asked him about his
217 perspective now, inquiring as to if it is any different than it was at the time it had occurred
218 years ago, and he said, "no." Mrs. Kapur asked for more information regarding what, if
219 anything, the Rockwall Police Department is doing to reach the Hispanic population within the
220 community.

221
222 Police Chief Riggs came forth and indicated that the city police department has made various
223 efforts to reach out to the Hispanic community, especially in the Lake Rockwall Estates
224 subdivision; however, doing so, he explained, has been met with difficulty.

225
226 Mrs. Kapur vocalized an encouragement to members of that community, suggesting they
227 provide feedback to the Police Department on how it is doing. She asked for more information
228 regarding police-related training, specifically regarding racial sensitivity.

229
230 Riggs explained that Rockwall officers get cultural diversity training on a bi-annual basis. He
231 went on to explain that our department has received a B+ rating on an internal audit that
232 focused on racial profiling. It was suggested, through that independent audit, that the
233 department increase its education. So, some brochures were drafted, and those are available
234 on the department's website. In addition, he explained that the department has received 2
235 racial profiling complaints in recent years, and both claims were found to be "unfounded" after
236 they were investigated. He shared that if/when a complaint is ever received, the video is pulled
237 and reviewed, and the complaint is investigated. Chief Riggs generally encouraged any
238 member of the public to contact him personally if / when anyone feels they have been
239 mistreated by one of his officers. He explained that his officers are held to a very high
240 standard, and he takes citizen's complaints very seriously.

241
242 **Richard Patrick**
243 **1525 Richfield Court**
244 **Rockwall, TX**

245
246 Mr. Patrick shared a story about him and his daughter working in the front yard in the past, and
247 his daughter waved at a police officer that was driving by. The officer then turned around,
248 came back, engaged his daughter in a brief conversation and gave her a gift certificate for a
249 free slushy to Sonic. He explained that the officer having done this made a really big, positive
250 impression on his daughter. Regarding exclusivity, Mr. Patrick asked if Rockwall County EMS
251 currently has the exclusive rights to transport patients out of local hospitals. Chief Poindexter
252 replied that, no, the city council recently revoked its "exclusivity" ordinance. Mr. Patrick
253 encouraged the city to consider moving to "first responders" because sometimes they can
254 arrive sooner than the ambulance company is able to arrive. He believes this could possibly
255 save lives.

256
257 **Ryan Clark**
258 **982 Chad Way**
259 **Rockwall, TX**

260
261 Mr. Clark explained that he would like to hear an answer from the City Manager, Assistant City
262 Manager or some of the council members. He explained that he is not against volunteer
263 firefighters, and he has no problem with supplementing paid staff with volunteers. He feels this

264 sort of arrangement was ok and made sense, say, 20 years ago; however, he does not believe
265 this makes sense currently today. He explained that he is a member of the Rockwall Fire
266 Department and is a paid career firefighter for the City of Plano. He generally explained that he
267 would like to know how it is ok and justifiable for only one fireman to be in a fire station with
268 major apparatus, ready to respond to a fire emergency in a given part of the city. He generally
269 expressed a serious concern with relying so heavily upon volunteers, explaining that he wants
270 to ensure the safety of both his family and of the firefighters responding to emergencies. He
271 expressed a desire to be in line with the standards set across the country and in neighboring
272 cities. He knows that positions have been asked for, but they have been denied. He does not
273 understand this, especially since the city is growing, and new homes and businesses are going
274 in.

275
276 City Manager Rick Crowley explained that growth and number of calls are taken into account
277 when evaluating FD staffing. He indicated that the city has been looking at fire personnel in
278 each annual budget, and it will again look at this in the upcoming year's budget discussions as
279 well.

280
281 **Ben Weible**
282 **215 Trout**
283 **Rockwall, TX**

284
285 Mr. Weible shared that he lives in Lake Rockwall Estates. He feels the city, in general, has great
286 leadership, especially Chief Poindexter and Chief Riggs. Mr. Weible shared that there may not
287 be an issue with professionalism of the police officers; however, maybe departmental policies
288 perpetuate some of the problems (i.e. state grants that provide incentives; DWI arrest related
289 incentives, etc.). He questions why searching a vehicle would be part of a turn signal-related
290 traffic stop. He encouraged the city council to evaluate how the city is setting policies,
291 especially related to the police department. He generally does not like the idea of the city
292 policies leading to the creation of more criminals. Mr. Weible shared that he has not been aware
293 of LRE related outreach in his neighborhood; however, he is generally encouraged by it, and he
294 is more than happy to be involved in these sorts of outreach efforts.

295
296 Mr. Weible asked how many calls the Fire Department runs / month. Chief Poindexter shared
297 that it is about 100 - 110 calls / month. Mr. Weible asked how long it has been since there has
298 been a fire-related death in the city. Poindexter indicated that it has been about 10 years since
299 the city has had any fire-related deaths.

300
301 **Tom Galli**
302 **645 Stafford Circle**
303 **Rockwall, TX**

304
305 Mr. Galli shared that he has a military background, and he comes from a military family. Two of
306 his brothers are retired officers in the military. He shared that he and his family are pretty in
307 tune with the Constitution and laws of the U.S. They believe that all citizens should be treated
308 equally with regards to the applicability of laws. He and his brothers have bene recently
309 discussing that there, perhaps, have been some dissolution of trust with regards to police
310 officers in the country in general. Also, there seems to be some distrust with our criminal
311 justice system with regards to its assurances to treat every person fairly and equitably. Mr.
312 Galli shared that, here in Rockwall, he does not believe we experience these sorts of distrust
313 issues, and he hopes that it stays this way

314
315 **Judith Matherne**
316 **1115 Signal Ridge**

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Mrs. Matherene asked for clarification on the interoperability radio system project that is underway and is forthcoming soon. Chief Poindexter explained that every agency (fire, police, EMS and public works) will be able to talk on the same system within the County, which is something that these departments countywide have never been able to do. He explained that it will have five transmission sites, and the city will be picking up some costs associated with maintenance and ongoing costs. October of 2017 is the estimated timeframe for having the new radio system "up and running." This project was spearheaded by Rockwall County.

Mayor Pruitt provided comments related to the positive collaboration that occurs on an ongoing basis within the county, between and among all of the cities and with Rockwall County itself. He thanked Rockwall County for spearheading and/or supporting many of the collaborative efforts and projects within the county.

**Matt Murphy
120 Crestbrook
Rockwall, TX**

Mr. Murphy explained that he is a member of the Rockwall Fire Department, and he serves as a police officer in the City of Garland. He encouraged people in the community to consider participating in ride outs with the Police Department, because it will yield a much different perspective than that which may be seen, for example, on TV. Mr. Murphy asked Chief Poindexter what sort of FD he would like to see, budget constraints aside.

Chief Poindexter went on to generally explain the city's annual process for addressing budgetary needs, citywide. Chief Poindexter explained that the FD, city manager and city council must all consider needs for all city departments. For example, the Streets Department has not added any new staff in many, many years. So, all needs have to be carefully evaluated, and the city and city council must adopt a balanced budget. Mr. Murphy asked for Poindexter's perspective on "first responders." Poindexter, under certain circumstances, does not have a problem with doing "first responding" on major medical calls.

**Sol Villasana
(No address was provided)**

Mr. Villasana thanked the staff and chiefs for all they do. He explained that he is an attorney and has, at various points in time, represented both citizens and police officers. He asked for feedback on the percentage of Rockwall police officers are currently minorities (Hispanic in particular), and how many currently speak Spanish. Chief Riggs explained that the department does focus on minority recruiting; however, there is a need for additional Spanish-speaking officers, as it currently only has three. He explained that he is open to any ideas that the public has with regards to recruiting good minority officers, especially those who speak the Spanish language.

**Randolph Chappell
303 E. Rusk**

Mr. Chappell is the pastor at the church located at 303 E. Rusk. He explained that he was delighted to receive an invitation to this public meeting. He knows that the community is growing, and the night life is getting more active, especially related to alcohol. He encouraged the city to not 'give up' on pastors and not exclude them from community partnerships and events. He shared a bit about a program that he used to be a part of in Memphis that generally

369 allowed the community an opportunity to learn more about local police officers on a more
370 personal level.

371
372 **Russell Phelps**
373 **(No address given)**

374
375 **Mr. Phelps pointed out that he has been a member of the community for many, many years, and**
376 **a lot of police officers have given him and members of his family many tickets over the years.**
377 **He thanked them for their service and for all they do for the community.**

378
379 **Councilmember Lewis indicated that the comments related to the Fire Department are received,**
380 **and the city has been and will continue to evaluate the FD's needs. Lewis thanked the fire and**
381 **police personnel for their service, and he assured them that he and his family are praying for**
382 **them each and every day. He is also sure that many thousands of people are praying for fire,**
383 **police and military personnel each and every day across our nation. He expressed that he**
384 **believes people 'targeting police' is wrong, as is using the media to do so. He indicated that**
385 **the comments tonight are well received. To fire and police personnel, he stated that, at the**
386 **Lewis household, "we've got your back."**

387
388 **V. Adjournment**

389
390 **Mayor Pruitt thanked everyone for coming and adjourned the meeting at 8:42 p.m.**

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392
393 **PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ROCKWALL, TEXAS, THIS 6th**
394 **day of September, 2016.**

395
396
397 **ATTEST:**

398 *Kristy Cole*
399 _____
400 **Kristy Cole, City Secretary**

Jim Pruitt

Jim Pruitt, Mayor

