

## **LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**

**August 11, 2009**

**3:35 P.M.**

Councilman Murphy, Chairman, called the meeting of the Legal and Legislative Committee to order with Councilmen Rico, Benson, Berz, Scott, Ladd, McGary and Robinson present. City Attorney Michael McMahan and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

**On motion of Councilman Rico, seconded by Councilwoman Ladd, the minutes of the July 28<sup>th</sup> Legal and Legislative Committee were approved.**

### **STREET ADDRESSING—JOHN STUERMER**

Chairman Murphy announced that this would be an informational session and that we had John Stuermer, Executive Director of 911, with us to address duplicate street names and names that sound alike—also suffixes such as Parkway and Circle. He asked if he would also need to address the overtime issue and the answer was “no”.

**Mr. Stuermer** stated that street addressing was a major issue for 911—that it was a public safety matter and that they tried to limit the possibility of going to the wrong address; that many times the caller is very excited, and it is hard to get all of the needed information; that he had been with 911 for five years, and we have a large number of streets with the same name across the City and Hamilton County. He used Morningside as an example, stating that there is an exact match both in name and number in Soddy Daisy and also in the City. Also “Engle” Ave. can be spelled “Engle”, “Engel”, and “Ingle”. He emphasized that they did not take this lightly, again stating that it was a public safety issue. These are not arbitrary decisions and places a tremendous amount of work on 911 when seconds count.

Councilwoman Berz wanted to know when this had first become a problem; that we have government coming in and shuffling around addresses, and we are not doing this across the board. She questioned if major streets like South Broad and North Broad would have to be changed. First she wanted to know when this became a problem and was it because of computers and secondly she wanted to know how 911 people are trained and did they not ask if a street would be in Chattanooga or Soddy Daisy.

Mr. Stuermer assured her that it was not because of computers but computers had brought light to the problem. She wanted to know how many “screw-ups” there had been, with Mr. Stuermer responding “many”. She asked if we would rename all of the streets that presented a conflict, with Mr. Stuermer explaining just those that presented problems—that this would not be wholesale across the City.

Councilman Benson tended to agree with Councilwoman Berz, stating that changing every lane and every trail did not make commonsense; that he thought this was an education problem with the dispatchers and also the public in being specific.

Mr. Stuermer felt that education would not help when people are not acting normally and in control—that they were trying to minimize risks; that this is a problem all across the country and there were a lot of issues other than just root names; that their people were trained extensively but could only act on the information provided by the callers.

Councilman McGary noted that we were considering an Ordinance change when this was just problematic streets. Chairman Murphy added that our current Ordinance requires doing away with duplicate streets, and we are fixing it “drop by drop”—that we might need an adjustment in our “tool”. Councilman Benson felt that we should change the Ordinance if we were not enforcing it as written.

Councilwoman Robinson questioned if the dispatcher could not ask if it were say Glenwood Circle or Glenwood Drive? Also, she thought it might be easier to change the numbers rather than the street names. Mr. Stuermer agreed that changing numbers was an option.

**Mr. Carney**, also with 911, stated that cell phones had caused the problem—that technology had made this more complicated, prompting Chairman Murphy to ask where technology is going with cell phones, the answer being “hopefully Phase II”. Mr. Carney admitted that this would take a long time.

Councilwoman Scott mentioned the impact on citizens, questioning how many calls come in a year and how many ambulances have gone to the wrong place? It was determined about 300,000 calls a year but no numbers on wrong places. It was noted that more than 1,000 streets would have to be changed under this policy, with Mr. Stuermer questioning putting saving a life against changing an address. Councilwoman Scott still had a problem with the people making the calls, questioning how changing the streets would eliminate wrong information—that she thought it was up to the alertness of 911 people and also the calmness of the person making the call. Mr. Stuermer added that land lines were not an issue—that cell phones make this very problematic. Councilwoman Berz also expressed that she would like the number of people being sent to the wrong places, with Mr. Stuermer stating that no one was tracking this; Councilwoman Berz questioned how we knew this was a problem with Mr. Stuermer stating the Council would have to take their word—that they did not track data.

Councilwoman Ladd stated that we were looking at repetitive commonalities with duplicate names and names that sound alike; that she did agree that one of the worst things was bad information.

Chairman Murphy questioned if prefixes were as much of an issue as suffixes? Suffixes seemed to present the most problems.

Councilman McGary wanted to know how many streets are on the list, and it was explained that this is an on-going thing and there is not one list. Mr. Stuermer explained that 911 did not make recommendations; that GIS had the criteria, and there is a procedure. Mr. Payne, City Engineer, added that when they become aware of a problem, they work through it and that street name changes require Council review.

Councilman Benson stated that the Ordinance is impossible and impractical as written, and he hated to be a party to not enforcing the policy as written—that we need to be in compliance.

Chairman Murphy thanked Mr. Stuermer for his time.

### **BICYCLE ISSUE**

Chairman Murphy allowed **Irene Catlin of 4714 Mountain Creek Road** to speak. She reiterated what was happening on her street on Tuesday nights, a street that she defined as being hazardous. She stated that Mountain Creek Road was substandard in width and was a hazard for both cyclists and motorists. She presented the State Ordinance that the City is contemplating passing, along with changes she deemed needed to be made underlined. (This is made a part of this minute material). She stated that her purpose was to keep all safe.

Councilwoman Berz stated that the committee heard this from Ms. Catlin last week; however it was not in writing. She questioned the Police Dept. being able to enforce this and also the cost of funding, with Ms. Catlin responding that cyclists would pay fees for license plates and to ride on public roads—that this had been done in other places. Councilwoman Berz wanted to know if Ms. Catlin felt this would get the bikes off her street, with her response being “she did not know” but that she was going with Mr. Pugliese to bicycle meetings to explain the law to them.

Councilwoman Scott felt that Ms. Catlin’s suggestions were good, but we might need more time to adopt this.

Chairman Murphy suggested a bike lane, which Ms. Catlin responded sounded lovely, but she did not think it would happen. Councilwoman Robinson suggested the simple solution of a sign on a single lane road.

**Mr. Pugliese** of Outdoor Chattanooga spoke, stating that he would work with Mrs. Catlin to resolve the problem; however the Ordinance as proposed has been vetted by the Police Dept., the City Attorney and the Task Force and does not preclude future discussion; that there would be some cost factors to the changes suggested by Ms. Catlin, and it could create a burden, and he would recommend against it; that it could create barriers to cyclists, and he would ask that we move forward with the original Ordinance.

Councilwoman Scott questioned what the City gained by approving this Ordinance as is. Attorney McMahan explained that the City Police Dept. could assign cases to City Court as opposed to Sessions Court, which makes it more efficient for our officers and overtime control—that it makes it more convenient for our officers. He went on to say that the City Traffic Engineer can post places that are dangerous, and his suggestion would be to post—that there were other ways rather than re-drafting the law to cover one-lane roads.

Ms. Catlin noted that just part of her situation was Mt. Creek Rd.; that she still felt that cyclists should pay, just as other drivers and read from a newspaper article that supported her view. She reiterated that it was not **just** Mt. Creek Rd.

The meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.