



Date: October 11, 2012

To: Thomas J. Bonfield, City Manager
Through: Wanda S. Page, Deputy City Manager
From: Rhonda B. Parker, Parks and Recreation Director
Chief Jose L. Lopez Sr., Chief of Police
Subject: Request to appear before Council Work Session 10/18/12-Amy McMann regarding the violence on the ATT.

Executive Summary

There have been a total of thirteen criminal incidents since January 2012 to date. Several arrests have taken place. Understanding the public response to these incidents on a public facility, City staff have made this situation a top priority as outlined in the City Managers' opinion piece article in the Herald Sun on October 7, 2012. Also the City Manager has established a Task Team made up of several departments to develop a comprehensive plan to address the incidents from as many angles as possible. Both Durham Police Department (DPD) on 10/9/12 and Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) on 10/10/12 spoke with Ms. McMann to address her concerns. The DPR Director also provided her with updates regarding all actions taken by the City of Durham (Task Team) since the incidents began. Ms. McMann was also invited to the Trail Watch presentation on 10/10/12 and she did attend. She is concerned that the media is not capturing what the City is doing to address these issues and she is still planning to attend the worksession on 10/18/12 to discuss what is going on with the trails and to offer assistance regarding possible fundraising.

Recommendation

The City is looking at this comprehensively, not just as a law enforcement issue but also from a prevention aspect. Over the past few weeks, the City has taken several measures to improve the safety of the trail, including the following:

1. Three UTVs purchased by DPD are being used to make regular patrols on the ATT.
2. A multi- departmental assessment of physical improvements that would enhance trail safety using Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques has been completed.
3. GIS mapping and synchronization of trails has been completed and coordinated with Emergency Communications to enable quick access for emergency purposes.
4. There has been increased Police Patrols by Officers on UTVs and bicycles. There were approximately 292 Directed Patrols in September.
5. Staff have cut back vegetation in overgrown areas and are looking into adding vegetation in other areas to inhibit access or gathering spots.
6. Staff has also added fencing structures which will inhibit access to trail from bridge access points.

7. Vertical distance sign markers to assist users with knowing their location have been added to supplement the existing on-ground location markers.
8. Safety Tip Signs promoting trail user awareness have been installed.
9. Additional engagement of trail users and the community will be encouraged through Trail Watch Safety Presentation (10/10/12, 7pm in City Council Chambers). Also Trail Watch activities 10/17/12.
10. There has been an establishment of a multi-departmental Task Team to address the trail incidents.
11. A new Public Awareness Campaign "Our Trail, Our Town" has been developed which encompasses Public Service Announcements informing trail users on safety tips and how to recognize and report suspicious activities on trails; presentations and training for the public-personal safety, bike and pedestrian patrols; personal items to encourage safety; increased Adopt-A-Trail incentives .
12. The City has informed the public through various media, particularly newspaper articles, press conferences about how to be safer when using the trails.
13. Promotion has been increased for DPR's Adopt-A-Trail to encourage neighborhoods, businesses and community groups to adopt sections of trails. This will be a real campaign to take back our trails.
14. Trail Address list which cross matches w/streets which makes identification easier has been created to supplement GPS trail addresses.
15. For citizens interested in working on a Volunteer Bike Patrol, training is being developed by DPD for later this month. They will partner with DOST, BPAC and the community.
16. Several City staff met with Capital Broadcasting Corporation to discuss partnerships (October 4, 2012). Protecting the trails is a community effort, involving both the City and private interests. The entire city--not just the organization, but residents as well—are taking what we see happening on the ATT very seriously. We all want to work together to keep the trail as something that we are not only proud of but an essential commuter route and facility for recreational usage for healthy lifestyles.
17. Voyager Academy has a scheduled work day with Keep Durham Beautiful to plant vegetation on the trail on October 24, 2012. These actions are best practices that are used by localities that have trails throughout the country.

Background

Due to recent incidents along the trail, most notably in the section from the 0.5 mile marker on Enterprise St. to Fayetteville St. and between the Southpoint Crossing trailhead and Cook Rd. (Woodcroft section) the City of Durham has been examining ways to improve safety for users and implementing those that can be done most quickly. While the number of incidents compared to the number of users is low, according to the Police Department, there is still strong concern among trail users about their safety. The City takes all safety concerns very seriously.

Issues and Analysis

Any initiative that is not presently budgeted will need funds to establish and to sustain over time: e.g., cameras, lighting, call boxes, additional bicycle officers assigned to the trail, etc.