

## Comstock Neighborhood Council Meeting Minutes - February 15, 2023

No council members or mayor representatives present.

Lt. Terry Preuninger and Sgt Brett Austin from the South Precinct attended the meeting and discussed numerous issues affecting our council, specifically:

1. Staffing. Neighborhood resource officer positions have been eliminated and have been added to the patrol division. There are 3 shifts, they are kept very busy. Large patrol area, extending out to the airport. Patrol officers may be pulled to other precincts to assist, causing decreased staffing in our precinct. Spokane is understaffed overall as a city for our size. Pay is poor in Spokane related to other areas such as the Tri-Cities and new applications are down. If concerned and want to lobby for more officers: contact city council and state representatives directly. Be precise, concise, and if possible have multiple others sign on to message as well for greatest impact.

2. Crime. An estimated 30-40% of all crimes are not reported to Crime Check, which adversely affects patrol officer staffing and budget. City politicians look at crime reports to determine staffing and budget. Please report all incidents to Crime Check, describing where and what is happening, if this is a recurrent problem, OK to post on NextDoor also, but the police don't have time to read these posts. Please notify Crime Check directly. Discussed recurrent underage drinking and teen vandalism at the northwest corner of Comstock Park; urged to call Crime Check each time it occurs, especially after 10 pm when the park closes, may be able to obtain extra police patrols, and the police can also notify the city park rangers to patrol the park. May be able to justify increased patrol officers and a higher budget. Private security coverage for neighborhoods is possible; no rules against using. Neighborhood decides what they want and who will provide coverage, Cliff Cannon neighborhood private security is one example. Good News: catalytic converter theft is decreasing as more recycling centers are now checking to see if they are stolen. Also, the police officers were thanked for the prompt response to a recent undesirable person in the neighborhood.

3. Drugs and homelessness. Drugs fuel 70-90% of all crime locally. Fentanyl is the most common drug. 80-95% of homelessness is related to drug use. Mental health issues and drug use can appear very similar. Police concentrating on dealers since drug possession misdemeanor charges are time-consuming, labor-intensive, and ineffective. Legislature is considering changing drug possession to a gross misdemeanor ([SB 5536](#)), so drug courts, mandatory drug rehabilitation, and other options can become involved.

4. Radar cameras and traffic calming. Data shows radar cameras effective in decreasing speeding and collisions, also a huge revenue source. If the driver is cited, acts as a parking ticket, doesn't affect insurance rates or driving record. City website lists camera sites. More cameras are proposed near hospitals and city parks. Our council submitted 3 nominations:

- High Drive between W 37th and Bernard Ave (or between W 33rd and W 37th)
- 29th Ave and Comstock Park, in the area of Post and Howard
- 29th Ave and Manito Blvd

Brightly colored flags and holders are currently available at 29th and Manito Ave. Annie Deasy in the Office of Neighborhood Resources is involved in traffic calming and speed bumps. Several members noted they were rear-ended when stopping for pedestrians. Recommendation was made to turn on flashers to prevent rear-end collisions when stopping/slowing for pedestrians, etc..

Discussed who is allowed to vote. Per current council bylaws, voters must have attended one or more council meetings in the last 12 months. Further discussion planned at the next council meeting in March.

Briefly discussed from last month: Avista is upgrading transmission poles in the High Drive Bluff area from approximately downtown to 29th Avenue. Input accepted until February 17th.

Jeff Mergler voted in as chair. Volunteers are still needed to fill positions. Current filled positions:

Chair: Jeff Mergler

Vice Chair: vacant

Treasurer: vacant

Secretary: vacant

Communications and Attendance: Gretchen McDevitt

Still needed: vice chair or co-chairs, secretary, volunteers to record attendance, one to send out notices, various committee chairs, and Comstock representatives to City Committees. Please contact Jeff Mergler or Gretchen McDevitt if you are interested in helping keep our neighborhood council up and running.

Submitted by SG