

**CITY OF WEST HOLLYWOOD
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2022
6:00 P.M.**

**West Hollywood Park Public Meeting Room - Council Chambers
625 N. San Vicente Boulevard
West Hollywood, CA 90069**

1) CALL TO ORDER

Chair Hallman called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.

2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Berger.

3) ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present:

Commissioner Berger
Commissioner Roman (Departed meeting at 7:57 P.M.)
Commissioner Steele
Vice Chair Balbone
Chair Hallman

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Oliver

Others Present:

Danny Rivas, City Director of Community Safety; Jessica Anukam, City Public Safety Specialist; Assistant Chief Drew Smith, Los Angeles County Fire Department; Sergeant Mike Yost, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department; David Aguilar, Regional Vice President - Southern California, Block by Block; Shea Gibson, Operations Manager, Block by Block.

4) APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Berger suggested Item 8D, Multi-Stall Gender Neutral Restroom Facilities Update, be moved to a future Public Safety Commission meeting when the new Commissioners are appointed.

Director Rivas briefly explained the status of Item 8D as it relates to going before the City Council in December 2022.

The Commission unanimously agreed to keep Item 8D on the current meeting agenda as scheduled.

ACTION: Approve the agenda of November 14, 2022. **Motion by Commissioner Berger, seconded by Vice Chair Balbone, and approved unanimously.**

POSTING OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the November 14, 2022, Public Safety Commission meeting was posted at City Hall, Plummer Park, and the West Hollywood Sheriff's Station.

5) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

ACTION: Approve the minutes of October 10, 2022. **Approved unanimously by the Commission.**

6) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Yola Dore, West Hollywood, updated the Commission as liaison from the City's Disabilities Advisory Board and also expressed her concerns pertaining to Item 8D, Multi-Stall Gender Neutral Restrooms.

Kevin B., West Hollywood, provided some background information and expressed his feelings concerning Item 8D, Multi-Stall Gender Neutral Restrooms.

Danny Gonzalez, Los Angeles, expressed his support for the expansion of Multi-Stall Gender Neutral Restroom facilities in the City.

Stephanie Harker, West Hollywood, shared details of an upcoming City event about safety at Plummer Park.

West Seegmiller, West Hollywood, invited the Commission and the public to join an upcoming Community Health Forum event taking place at Plummer Park.

7) COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Chair Hallman acknowledged Commissioner Oliver's absence.

Commissioner Steele gave her well wishes to community member, Yola Dore. She also thanked and responded to one of the public commenters about an upcoming event.

Vice Chair Balbone spoke about an annual LGBTQ+ youth event that she had recently attended.

8) UNFINISHED BUSINESS

8A. REPORT FROM FIRE DEPARTMENT – MONTHLY REPORT

Chief Smith gave thanks to the City of West Hollywood and community for their support. He also reported on the various fire occurrences for the month of October 2022. He pointed out the expected changes in fire activity as the seasons also transition. He briefly provided updates of recent City events and community activities that the Fire Department participated in.

Commissioner Berger inquired about the turnout for the recent Fire Department CERT classes.

Chair Hallman also inquired about upcoming CERT classes.

Vice Chair Balbone asked about the status of recent fire incidents.

Commissioner Steele inquired about Halloween statistics and Fire Department calls for service. She also asked about information being distributed out to the community regarding holiday fire prevention.

Commissioner Hallman echoed the importance of fire prevention reminders being sent out to the community during this holiday season.

Director Rivas spoke about fire prevention messaging expected to be released by the City and the Los Angeles County Fire Department during the holiday season.

Commissioner Roman inquired about the security locks for commercial dumpsters.

Commissioner Berger suggested the Commission put together recommendations to bring forward to the City Council regarding fire prevention. He also suggested that the CERT program be offered for the community to conveniently attend.

The Commission and Director Rivas spoke about incorporating this topic into the Commission's future Work Plan.

Chief Smith and Director Rivas responded to all the questions and comments made by the Commissioners.

8B. SHERIFF'S REPORT – MONTHLY REPORT

Sergeant Yost reported on Part I and Part II crime statistics in West Hollywood for October 2022 which included grand thefts, petty thefts, burglaries, and arrests. He also spoke about the higher cases of reported rape incidents. The data reported showed a decrease when compared to the same month from the prior year. Sergeant Yost also responded to Commissioner inquiries made from the prior Commission meeting in October 2022.

Commissioner Steele made several inquiries regarding the crime stats presented for October 2022 as well as inquiries of recent tickets issued to scooter riders. She also made the suggestion for more foot beats near high traffic areas of nightlife establishments.

Commissioner Berger inquired about the rape cases, recent arrests reported, and asked what the station needs to be more effective.

Sergeant Yost responded that the station could use more personnel for their policing teams and a dedicated public information officer.

Chair Hallman asked about the increase of intoxication and overdoses that occur during the holiday season.

Commissioner Berger made a suggestion of having the Commission and other members of the public go throughout the community to deliver safety notices as it was done in prior years. He also inquired about the estes robbery crime stats.

Vice Chair Balbone wanted to bring focus on the noticeable crime spikes, specifically rape and sexual assaults, during the months of October and June of each year.

Commissioner Steele made comments regarding these crime spikes. She spoke about the significance of the information that the Sheriff's Department provides as well as the importance of community engagement. She also expressed the importance of prior discussions related to nighttime safety and drink spiking.

Director Rivas presented supplemental crime statistic charts that will be included in future Commission meetings.

The Commission and Director Rivas had a discussion regarding the crime statistic charts presented and recommendations for future reporting.

Sergeant Yost and Director Rivas responded to all the Commissioner's questions and comments. Sergeant Yost also encouraged members of the public to always report on crimes they see occurring in the community.

8C. REPORT FROM BLOCK BY BLOCK SECURITY AMBASSADORS – MONTHLY REPORT

Shea Gibson, Block by Block, gave an update on the October 2022 monthly report and stationed kiosks placed throughout the City. He highlighted the newly added monthly reports that include other City areas covered by the ambassadors and spoke about Halloween operations, and recent trainings for personnel.

Chair Hallman and Commissioner Roman made suggestions to increase awareness of the role security ambassadors serve in the City.

Commissioner Steele agreed on the suggestions made by her colleagues and inquired about the reported data and Narcan trainings.

Commissioner Berger asked about areas of the City that are more prone to loitering. He also suggested Block by Block monthly reports be made visible on the screen during future Commission meetings.

Commissioner Steele inquired about the data provided in the security ambassador report.

Vice Chair Balbone shared her feedback about the security ambassadors she often sees around the community. She also made a suggestion for them to get in contact and work with the local businesses and Chamber of Commerce.

Chair Hallman inquired about the residential areas in the City covered by Block by Block patrols.

Shea Gibson and David Aguilar responded to all the questions and comments made by the Commissioners.

8F. COMMISSION MEMO PICKPOCKET STUDY SESSION UPDATE.

ACTION: Item 8F. Commission Memo Pickpocket Study Session Update was moved up on the agenda. **Unanimously approved by the Commission.**

Director Rivas briefly went over the details of the pickpocket recommendations in the draft memo letter that will be sent to the City Council to review in December 2022.

The Commissioners provided input and had a discussion with Director Rivas on the draft memo letter.

Commissioner Berger suggested that a similar letter or online poll be sent to the pickpocket study session business participants for their input and feedback on the Commission's recommendations.

Commissioner Steele expressed her concerns on the use of security cameras and identification systems to address the issue of pickpocketing.

The Commission discussed the use of security cameras and identification systems as part of the recommendations reflected in the draft memo letter.

Vice Chair Balbone proposed to amend the draft memo to separate the Commission's recommendations and items for the City Council to review.

Director Rivas went over the revisions to the draft memo letter for final review and approval by the Commission.

8D. MULTI-STALL GENDER NEUTRAL RESTROOM FACILITIES UPDATE

Director Rivas presented the updated staff report and supplemental attachments for Item 8D by request of the Commission from the previous meeting.

Stephanie Harker, West Hollywood, clarified her position on the gender neutral restrooms and also expressed her concerns regarding safety on the topic.

Chair Hallman inquired about the gender neutral restroom facilities at some West Hollywood establishments and requested if anyone has received any feedback from patrons who have used such facilities.

Luckie Alexander, West Hollywood, spoke about his support of the gender neutral restrooms and expressed the importance of safety on the topic.

Cathy Blaivas, West Hollywood, echoed the sentiments from previous speakers on the emphasis of safety for the gender neutral restrooms. She suggested the City reach out to other cities for guidance that already have these types of facilities.

The Commission had a continued discussion on the item, with emphasis on safety and requesting that be a focal point within the design and planning process. They also clarified the common confusion of the proposed ordinance as it relates to commercial establishments versus public facilities such as parks.

Commissioner feedback was divided on whether doors should be required to be floor to ceiling and differences with safety precautions at City facilities versus commercial establishments.

Chair Hallman suggested a “panic button” be considered to be installed in the gender neutral restroom facilities for safety purposes.

8E. NIGHTTIME SAFETY STUDY SESSION DEBRIEF

Vice Chair Balbone thanked staff for the list of recommendations and suggested that the Commission move forward with a more specific and consolidated list of recommendations the City Council can consider.

Commissioner Steele requested some clarity and detail on some of the listed recommendations and expressed her concerns and disappointment with how the Study Session was facilitated by the City Council and the distribution of the drink-spiking test strips.

Chair Hallman also expressed his discontent with how the City Council Study Session was facilitated and inquired about the drink-spiking test strips.

Director Rivas provided an update on the City’s distribution of the drink-spiking test strips.

Commissioner Berger agreed with the comments made by Vice Chair Balbone and Commissioner Steele. He recommended engaging the community to assist in distribution efforts of the drink-spiking test strips to local businesses.

Vice Chair Balbone made a suggestion and list of recommendations to be placed on a memo to the City Council to review.

Commissioner Steele proposed that the City Council establish a Nightlife and Sexual Assault Task Force, Board, or Commission.

The recommendations Vice Chair Balbone proposed be placed on a memo to the City Council as part of the upcoming item that will be presented to the City Council in December 2022 were unanimously approved by the Commission in attendance.

Director Rivas responded to the recommendations and comments brought up by the Commission regarding the Nighttime Safety Study Session.

8G. REQUEST TRACKING AND COMMISSION CALENDAR

Director Rivas briefly discussed some upcoming calendar conflicts and proposed changes to the meeting schedule for the Commission.

The Commissioners provided feedback and gave direction to Director Rivas to schedule a Public Safety Commission meeting in December 2022 and cancel the January 2023 meeting.

8H. COMMISSION WORK PLAN

Director Rivas spoke about focusing on the Commission Work Plan in the future after the arrival of any newly appointed Commissioners for the February 2023 meeting.

Vice Chair Balbone requested some guidance from Commissioners who have been through the process of going over and setting the new Work Plan.

9) NEW BUSINESS

No new business.

10) ITEMS FROM STAFF

Director Rivas briefly provided some updates of recent City events and activities. He also addressed the confusion some members of the public experienced that attempted to join the last Commission meeting by telephone and virtually via Zoom. Director Rivas concluded his update by highlighting the changes made to the City's Public Safety Commission website.

11) PUBLIC COMMENTS

Luckie Alexander, West Hollywood, made some clarifications on the comments he made earlier on the gender neutral restroom item.

12) ITEMS FROM THE COMMISSION/COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Commissioner Berger expressed his satisfaction to staff of the Commission updates to the City website and Zoom meeting access.

Vice Chair Balbone echoed the same sentiments to staff.

Commissioner Steele thanked staff and her fellow Commissioners. She also requested to receive the Commission agenda earlier each month if possible.

Chair Hallman also thanked all the Commissioners and shared that he would like to see future meetings conducted in a similar fashion.

13) ADJOURNMENT

The Public Safety Commission adjourned at 9:40 P.M. to its next regular meeting to be determined.

DocuSigned by:

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Public Safety Commission Chair

DocuSigned by:

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Public Safety Commission Secretary

A copy of the audio recording of this meeting can be obtained from the City Clerk's office upon request.

(Disclaimer: Staff records the meetings for the sole purpose of composing the official meeting minutes; therefore, the recordings are not of commercial quality.)