

**City of Benton City**  
**Special Council Workshop Meeting Minutes**  
**June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017**

**Cindy Deleur:** (00:00:00\*Audio recording begins – Program in progress) Ken Lattin is going to speak with us about Crime Preventative Tips so that you can do things in your neighborhood to help stop crime or avert crime; and Detective Gonzalez is going to speak with us about gangs and he's the Captain, is that right?

**Sgt. Gonzalez:** Sergeant.

**Ms. DeLeur:** I just promoted him to Captain. (Crosstalk) So all we ask is that please save your questions for after everyone speaks, maybe your questions will be answered in the process of them speaking. Thank you.

**C. COMMUNITY DISCUSSION – NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS (00:00:40\*)**  
**Deputy Benitez** identified himself and briefly shared his career history.

Temporary interruption to formally called meeting to order

**A. CALL TO ORDER –** Mayor Lehman called the June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Special Council Workshop Meeting at the Community Center to order at 6:34 p.m. (00:01:37\*)

**B. ROLL CALL (00:01:50\*)**

Councilmembers Present **Jake Mokler**  
**Mary Lettau**  
**Lisa Stade**  
**Vanessa Coates** (Excused - Ill)  
**Dave Sandretto** (Arrives at 6:45 p.m.)

City Staff Present **Stephanie Haug, City Clerk/Treasurer**

Other Professionals Present **Deputy J.P. Benitez, Benton County Sheriff's Office**  
**Sgt. Horacio Gonzalez, Benton County Sheriff's Office**  
**Sgt. Ken Lattin, Kennewick Police Department**

**C. COMMUNITY DISCUSSION – NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH PROGRAMS Continues (00:02:10\*)**  
**Deputy Benitez** brought handouts regarding the Neighborhood Watch Program. The Neighborhood Watch Program relies upon citizens. Benton County Sheriff's Office facilitates way for citizens to communicate with each other and law enforcement. A suspicious activity or suspicious circumstance is dependent upon what citizen deems unordinary for the area. Calls are triaged but the Non-Emergency Dispatch number will take the information. A map documenting crime in a general area can be located at [www.communitycrimemap.com](http://www.communitycrimemap.com), a resource available to citizens showing incidents that have occurred in their neighborhood. **Deputy Benitez** demonstrated how the crime map works using Babs Avenue as an example. He also touched on what the Sherriff's Office is looking for when a citizen calls. Your call gives law enforcement the authority to contact a suspicious person. The Non-Emergency Dispatch number for law enforcement is 509-628-0333. [Jean.paul.benitez@co.benton.wa.us](mailto:Jean.paul.benitez@co.benton.wa.us)

**Sgt. Gonzalez** noted gathering of this data is important to what they do; calling in tips is also useful to the Department.

**Deputy Benitez** recounted past examples of citizen input leading to arrest of guilty individuals, and the importance of knowing your neighbors in efforts to thwart criminal activity. He referenced Pages 16 and 17 of the handbook to show sample of a "typical suspect" and explanations of what law enforcement looks for in a suspicious individual, including sex, height, weight, facial qualities, build and clothing, and vehicle descriptions if applicable. **Deputy Benitez** also cited sheet for audience members to sign up for creation of Neighborhood Watch Lists.

**Sgt. Gonzalez** shared a brief summary of his background and his current position in Benton County Gang Unit. He gave outline of Gang Unit history and purpose, including statistics for search and arrest warrants, and illegal drug confiscations. **Sgt. Gonzalez** reiterated the role of citizen input in successful arrests and convictions for gang activity in Benton City. He gave a description of what

constitutes a gang and detailed common aspects of gang members such as broken homes, low self-esteem, and ability to gain status within a gang, and/or motivated by money. He noted there are about thirty gangs in the Tri-Cities/Benton County area, twenty-two of which are currently active. **Sgt. Gonzalez** stated there is an estimated eight hundred to a thousand active gang members and associates including both males and females, ages eight to sixty. Groups are diverse and include Hispanics, African-American, White, Asian and outlaw motorcycle gangs. Clues that someone might be a gang member include colors, symbols, tattoos and street names. Gang members will usually admit to being a gang member. Law enforcement has a gang database that shares information in Tri-Cities. Benton County Jail also has a Gang Unit. Database includes names, tattoos, gang information, etc. and law enforcement is required to validate every three to four years. Gangs are involved in many activities from graffiti to murder. Graffiti abatement is very necessary and useful tool for thwarting gang activity. Gangs usually have branches; main leaders, drug dealers and those that do graffiti. Law enforcement works hard to establish trends through daily sharing of Intel.

**Sgt. Gonzalez** then detailed reasons someone might join gang including identity, recognition, money, desire for love, discipline, belonging, and protection. He also gave information on the number of ways someone could join a gang. Many times the right is earned because a number of family members are already gang members. He also noted it is hard to get out, often having to move away. Gangs are a culture of violence and children are introduced at a very young age. Influences include media, music, movies, internet, family, friends and videogames. Pre-violence indicators include colors, hand signs, the way shoes are laced, and many other small details.

**Sgt. Gonzalez** also gave detailed information regarding stances and postures evident in gang members locally. He stated gang members frequently choose to post their activities on Facebook; noting Facebook is one of the first places the Gang Unit looks for clues. **Sgt. Gonzalez** highlighted that all tattoos have meanings; an empty teardrop designates the gang member as a prospect. A full tear drop indicates member has committed a crime, most likely violent such as assault or homicide. Three dots mean "La Vida Loca" which translates to "my crazy life." He also gave examples of local gang names and how the Gang Unit tracks monikers and symbols to suspected gang members. **Sgt. Gonzalez** posted his cellphone number (509)727-8788, and his email address, [HoracioGonzalez@co.benton.wa.us](mailto:HoracioGonzalez@co.benton.wa.us) and encouraged citizens to call anytime.

**Sgt. Lattin** introduced himself and gave a brief outline of his experience in law enforcement. He stated his presentation was Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and noted there were fliers available on the table. **Sgt. Lattin** detailed some of the crime prevention tips he has found useful in the past. One of these is natural surveillance or eyes upon your property. This could include visibility from street, knowing your neighbors, and trusting your instincts. Criminals look for opportunity, for places that make it easy for them to hide. Many times, they simply go to front door and knock, waiting for someone to answer. If someone does answer the door, they claim they are there to do a survey or sell something. If nobody answers, they will likely go to the rear yard looking to find entry. He advised removing objects that can be used to hide behind such as bushes and trees. He encouraged the use of fences and gates, especially to access backyards. Get to know your neighbors so they will know who should be at your house and who should not. If something doesn't feel quite right, trust your instincts. Get together with your neighbors, create a network, and watch out for each other.

**Sgt. Lattin** advocated making it harder to be a victim by forcing those who want to prey on somebody to go elsewhere. Design considerations for businesses include location of entrance to reduce chances of someone going around your house looking easy way in. Windows are also a concern; make sure they are not blocked or covered, reducing visibility. Are you visible from the street once you're inside? Many businesses have windows covered, making it hard for law enforcement to see inside from street. Parking lots should be well-lit and secure. He suggested giving thought to landscaping and location of trees to minimize hiding places.

**Sgt. Lattin** encouraged attending social events where you can get to know your neighbors; following through with Block Watch Networks; letting your neighbors know when you'll be out of town so they can keep an eye on your place. He strongly advised keeping your valuables locked up. He noted statistically speaking, more than half the burglaries and car thefts are not forced, meaning property was left unlocked. Criminals, thieves and burglars are opportunists, looking for easy pickings. They prefer darkness, places to hide and unsecured valuables in houses and cars. Criminals involved in property crimes frequently return to places they've burglarized before because they know it's easy. Use intelligence – lock up guns and valuables!

**Sgt. Lattin** wrapped up his presentation by reviewing earlier tips for crime prevention, and repeated the non-emergency contact number. He also stated if you feel like you need to call the police, but can't remember the non-emergency number, call 9-1-1.

(Councilmember Sandretto arrives at 6:45 p.m.)

**Deputy Benitez, Sgt. Gonzalez** and **Sgt. Lattin** answered questions and discussed concerns brought to their attention by audience members. **Ms. Haug** clarified city requirements for posting Neighborhood Watch signs, stating neighborhood would need to purchase the sign and City would install the sign in appropriate location. Benton County Sheriff's Office offers a Vacation Home Check Program. Residents can contact either the Sheriff's Office at (509)735-6555 or Non-Emergency Dispatch to take part in this service. **Sgt. Gonzalez** assured the audience that Benton City is a relatively safe town and the Benton County Sheriff's Office enjoys patrolling this area. **Sgt. Lattin** advised landlords to due diligence in background checks and screenings and follow up inspections to discourage gang element in the community. Gang members generally do not buy a house, but look to rent apartments and houses. **Mayor Lehman** cited the Crime Resistant Community Living Program partnered by Kennewick, Richland and Pasco Police Departments, as an excellent resource for landlords. Citizens were directed to call law enforcement whenever they feel strongly about a vehicle that continues to drive around the neighborhood or some other suspicious activity that makes them uncomfortable. Residents were also encouraged to provide as much detail as possible for descriptions of individual(s) including height, weight, and build; and vehicle make/model and license plate numbers can be very useful. In response to a question about curfew in Benton City, **Sgt. Lattin** responded that was more of a Supreme Court issue as most curfews have been deemed unconstitutional. **Mayor Lehman** inquired about the next step in creating a neighborhood watch. Citizens were encouraged to put names on list and **Deputy Benitez** will begin setting up regular meetings through the City, Council and the Mayor. **Sgt. Gonzalez** again repeated the need for citizens to call upon law enforcement in suspicious situations.

**D. ADJOURNMENT (01:19:00\*)**

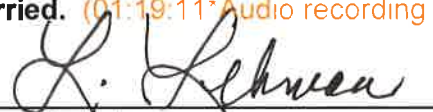
**Councilmember Mokler:** I make a motion that we adjourn the meeting.

**Councilmember Sandretto:** Second.

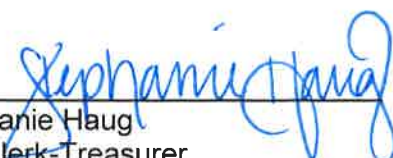
**MOTION #1- C. J. Mokler moved and C. D. Sandretto seconded to adjourn the June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Special Council Workshop Meeting at 7:51 p.m.**

**VOICE VOTE #1- C. J. Mokler, C. D. Sandretto, C. L. Stade, C. M. Lettau**

**ALL YEAS. Motion carried. (01:19:11\*Audio recording ends)**



Linda Lehman  
Mayor, City of Benton City



Stephanie Haug  
City Clerk-Treasurer

Date: 7/18/17