

A 10 Point Action Plan to help make Waltherboro a safer place for its citizens

From Mayor Bill Young, City Manager Jeff Lord, and members of City Council

April 1, 2010

- 1) **Continue and improve community policing by cross training and adding additional public safety officers.** The City has already added three sworn officers by cross-training some of its firefighters. A public safety officer is trained as both a firefighter and as a police officer. They must graduate from the police academy and receive on the job patrol training. They must reach "Firefighter I" certification to qualify on the fire side. "Firefighter I" is not the minimum legal requirement and is in fact advanced beyond that. Therefore, patrol officers can assist in case of a fire call, and the firefighters can be brought in to fill gaps during an incident or to add to other "forces" on duty for additional coverage.

The city has also added a **community resource officer** with the assistance of the COPS (Community Oriented Policing Services) Grant Program through the United States Justice Department. This officer's job is to coordinate the community policing effort and crime watch areas. This officer will also work with the communities and organize the community outreach program, which is already in place. Two crime watch groups currently in development are Padgett Loop and North Lemacks. A grant has been awarded to add two more officers this year for the drug team.

- 2) **Encourage and support crime watch groups and enlist help from the citizenry.** As the public safety officers make contacts through community engagement, they will conduct and facilitate meetings among interested citizens to create and then train for crime watch initiatives. Thus far, meetings such as this have been held in three areas. City officials and enforcement officers, public safety officials, and others are reaching out to members of the community one-by-one and through community organizations to build trust so citizens will keep us informed of potential problem areas and stay engaged when something does happen.
- 3) **Reinstate the night field interview program.** The night field interview program has been reinstated. If an officer sees somebody out at night, that officer will stop and make friendly contact with that person to let them know that an officer presence is out there if needed. It's designed to be sure potential victims and perpetrators are aware that officers are there and watching at all times.
- 4) **Work for neighborhood improvement through code enforcement.** Code enforcement is using municipal codes that restrict property owners from certain acts that may contribute to the undesirability of an area. For instance, there are codes against "accumulation," which give cause to force someone to clean-up their yard and remove any blight. Other codes for abandoned vehicles and unsecured structures exist and will be enforced. Code enforcement requires individuals to keep their property well maintained, presentable and not a potential target or haven for crime. This raises community pride, economic independence and the overall welfare of the community.

Additionally, the Public Safety Department and the Code Enforcement Department are working together to enforce laws. This is a coordinated effort where public safety officers

may have access to a search warrant, and when they identify a possible code enforcement issue, they will bring the code enforcement officer in so the problem may be addressed.

- 5) **Partner with the sheriff's office and SLED division office set to be located in Walterboro.** While the City has been working with SLED to pursue outstanding warrants outside of our jurisdiction, SLED has already assigned two permanent agents to the area as part of an enhanced enforcement agreement. They have also worked with the County to establish their regional office here, which brings many more agents to the area. It should be noted that they are not moving here because of crime. They are coming because it is a better location for their regional office, and because Walterboro is still a great place to live, work and play.
- 6) **Partner with SCE&G for improved lighting in high crime areas.** SCE&G has been expanding the use of dense street lighting in targeted areas to promote safe neighborhoods and has placed additional lights (about a dozen) in the area of the drive-by shooting. The cost is nominal (\$15 per light/month), but the effect has been immediate. This has been very successful in the Gerideau and McDaniel Street area. We are not seeing people hanging out on the street like they used to do. A priority of Council is to expand the use of such lighting in other areas as well.
- 7) **Work with the legislature to support legislation aimed at reducing crime and getting repeat offenders off the streets.** We have also been working with other jurisdictions that have had success fighting the same problems, most notably North Charleston. Further, we are continuing to work with schools and churches in mentoring and at-risk programs.
- 8) **Partner with the Colleton Ministerial Alliance and schools, and continue with the Gun Buy Back Program.** This is a program that will allow us to work with local businesses and community groups to reduce the accessibility of guns to those who may possess them illegally.
- 9) **Use City of Walterboro Youth Advisory Commission as a resource.** This commission has been created, and the city is in the process of recruiting members.
- 10) **Partner with County Council to address issues countywide.** Just as our partnership with SLED allows us to get out and serve some of our warrants, we have been working together with the county to do the same. SLED has assigned people specifically for us and they are available for that purpose. We have done the same with the county. Their ongoing investigations are tied with ours, and there is cross-communication between those. They have more incidents than we have, and we have been trying to assist them whenever we can. SLED has been the coordinating entity.

“Walterboro is still a wonderful place to live work and play, and we are committed to doing all we can to assertively fight the crime issue we have witnessed recently. It is our belief that with the help of every citizen, every city official, every community leader and partner organization, as well as our legislators in Columbia, we **will** be successful, and we **will** return

a sense of safety to those who live here and those who visit the many attractions and treasures that make this a special part of the Lowcountry.”

Mayor Bill Young