

SEX OFFENDER LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

A G E N D A

April 11, 2007 - 4:00 p.m. - Caucus Room - City Hall - City of Dover
Public comments are welcomed on any item and will be permitted at appropriate times. When possible, please notify the City Clerk (736-7008 or e-mail at tmcdowell@dover.de.us) should you wish to be recognized.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

1. Adoption of Minutes - Regular Sex Offender Legislation Review Committee Meeting of March 28, 2007
2. Discussion - Recommendations and Final Review
3. Adjournment

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SEX OFFENDER LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Sex Offender Legislation Review Committee Meeting was held on March 28, 2007 at 4:01 p.m. with Chairman Slavin presiding. Members present were Mr. Hare, Dr. Goaté, Lt. Bernat, Mrs. Levitt, Mrs. Mercer, and Mrs. Shroyer. Ms. Bell, Mrs. Ratliff, and Mrs. Ingram were absent.

AGENDA ADDITIONS/DELETIONS

Mr. Hare moved for approval of the agenda, seconded by Mrs. Mercer and unanimously carried.

Adoption of Minutes - March 14, 2007

Mr. Hare moved for approval of the Minutes of the March 14, 2007 Sex Offender Legislation Review Committee meeting, seconded by Mrs. Mercer and unanimously carried.

Discussion - Possible Recommendations and Draft Final Review

Mr. Slavin provided members with a summary of the recommendations generated at the last meeting (March 14, 2007) and indicated that he added verbiage for their review (*Attachment #1*). Once members have reviewed and finalized the recommendations, Mr. Slavin stated that a public forum would be scheduled to review the recommendations. He has requested that the City Clerk schedule the committee's final report for a presentation to City Council during their Regular Meeting of April 23, 2007, at 7:30 p.m.

Mrs. Levitt commended members for focusing their efforts in a positive manner by recommending positive actions rather than recommending punishments like so many other municipalities have done. She warned members that during the public forum, these types of questions will probably be asked.

Mr. Slavin suggested that the committee make a presentation at the public forum and include information they have reviewed during their deliberations so that the public is made aware of all the issues involved. As mentioned by Dr. Goaté, Mr. Slavin stated that it should be noted that the solutions are not specific to city governments.

Responding to Dr. Goaté, Mr. Slavin indicated that some municipalities have adopted ordinances regarding sex offenders that virtually makes it impossible for a sex offender to reside within the town/city limits.

Mrs. Shroyer indicated that the Town of Smyrna was reviewing the possibility of adopting an ordinance; however, she stated that there has been no final action taken and is not aware of the reasons why. Responding, Mr. Slavin requested that Mrs. McDowell, City Clerk, contact the Town of Smyrna to ascertain why they have not finalized the adoption of an ordinance.

In response to several members, Mr. Slavin suggested that item #2 under "Notification" be amended to include e-mail with an explanation of providing clear pictures. Lt. Bernat also suggested the inclusion of subscribing to www.Crimelab.net.

With regards to item #3 under "Notification", Lt. Bernat suggested that Tier II sex offenders be included.

Mr. Slavin reminded members that the charge of the committee is to reduce risk by providing information/education. Considering this charge, he requested that members determine which topics should be included in the presentation for the public forum and Council. It was his feeling that the "20 Questions" would be included in the report, as well as the charge of the committee, an explanation to "dispel the myth" and, the complexity/difficulty of the issue and the emotions involved. He also suggested that a brief paragraph be included on Random Acts or Known Predator (include statistics) and the "Go Ahead and Ask" Program. The message should also be for people to be vigilant but not to encourage vigilantism, explaining that citizens should arm themselves with knowledge and information but not take the law into their own hands. Mr. Slavin also suggested that the report include information regarding the composition of the committee, membership, deliberations, etc.

Dr. Goaté suggested the inclusion of the definitions for sex offender, predator, pedophile, etc. and include the statistics for each tier. In response to Mr. Slavin, members agreed to include information regarding recidivism. In addition, Mrs. Levitt suggested that the report include a list of the guests that have come before the committee.

Mrs. Levitt stated that there has been much discussion regarding children; however, she felt that the recommendations should include rapists and higher education facilities.

Mr. Slavin thought it would be important to dispel the notion that action can be taken to totally eliminate the problem. He suggested that the report and presentations emphasize education, enforcement, and most particularly the responsibility of parents to take action by using the tools provided to protect their children.

Referring to the topic of education, Mrs. Mercer noted that many offenders are known and suggested that children should be reminded that no matter what the offender has threatened, they need to tell someone. She suggested that "what a child should do if they see someone" should be included, which is for them to get the license plate and remember the car. Children should also be aware of the key phrase "I got a secret".

Based on the comments of members, Mr. Slavin developed a list of the topics and an outline to be included in the presentations and report (*Attachment #2*).

Dr. Goaté suggested that there be generous advertisement regarding the public forum and presentations and that the information should be disseminated throughout the community, and organizations such as Rotary Clubs, etc. should be involved.

Mr. Slavin suggested that in order for it to be evident that this has been a group effort, those members who wish to present a specific topic should be given the opportunity to do so when the committee's recommendations are presented.

The next meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2007 at 4:00 p.m. in the Caucus Room to review the final recommendations.

Mrs. Levitt moved for adjournment, seconded by Mrs. Shroyer and unanimously carried.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:10 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy A. Slavin
Chairman

TAS/tm/jg

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Attachments

Attachment #1 - Summary of Recommendations

Attachment #2 - List of the Topics and Outline to be Included in the Final Presentations and Report

Education

1. **Public Forum.** A public forum should be held at the conclusion of the Committee's work to review the recommendations.
2. **5-in-5 Communication Strategy.** The Committee recommends that a "5 in 5" communication strategy be adopted, utilizing five different methods of communicating important issues relative to the issues of sex offenders in our community. Such strategies might include the following:
 - a. Printed copies of the report will be available, as well as posted on the City's web site.
 - b. The City of Dover utility bill "stuffers" should be utilized to promulgate important information to citizens on how to become more knowledgeable about the issue of sex offenders in our community.
 - c. An email subscription service should be offered by the City and used to communicate information about this issue to citizens.
 - d. The Committee will ask Comcast to sponsor a short message about the Committee's work, as well as to broadcast the "Safe Side" video.
 - e. The Committee will ask school districts to design and use a special "red envelope" approach to sending information home to parents when notification is warranted.
3. **Police Seminars.** The Dover Police Department should hold bi-annual public seminars on the issue of sex offenders, to include enforcement and notification.
4. **Curriculum.** The Delaware Department of Education is encouraged to develop curriculum which addresses the issue of sex offenders, and is also encouraged to require an annual awareness day on this issue in all schools in Delaware.
5. **Go Ahead and Ask.** The "Go Ahead and Ask" program is recommended for all consumers who do business with contractors for services rendered in their home. The program encourages the consumer to ask two questions:
 - a. "Have you checked the criminal background of all employees who will do work in my home?"
 - b. "Can I have their names in order to run my own check against the sex offenders registry?"
6. **Safe Side Videos.** The Dover Public Library is encouraged to buy multiple copies of the "Safe Side" video and make it available for borrowing by all library card holders. In addition, it is recommended that Comcast be asked to broadcast these videos as a benefit to the community.

Enforcement

1. **Sex Crimes Unit.** It is recommended that a Sex Crimes Unit be established in the Dover Police Department. This would require adding two Detectives to the Dover Police Department and implementing the unit within the Criminal Investigations section.
2. **Homeless Ordinance.** The City of Dover is encouraged to adopt a “homeless sex offender” ordinance. This ordinance would require that any sex offender registering him- or herself as homeless be required to confirm that registration on a frequent basis at the Dover Police Department.
3. **Homeless registration loophole.** It is recommended that the General Assembly address the current loophole in state law which allows sex offenders to register as homeless.
4. **Longer probation for Tier III.** It is recommended that the State of Delaware mandate that all Tier III sex offenders be placed on life time probation, or at least a significantly longer probation period.
5. **Failure to re-register.** It is recommended that the State of Delaware implement penalties for failure to re-register as a sex offender be stiffened from the current Class G Felony status.
6. **Driver’s License and Registration.** It is recommended that the driver’s license and vehicle registration for all sex offenders be noted on the documentation issued by the State of Delaware.

Notification

1. **Sex Offender Registry.** It is recommended that the State of Delaware include the ability to search the Sex Offender Registry by place of employment, school, and school district.
2. **Clearer Pictures for Schools.** It is recommended that clear pictures of sex offenders be sent to schools by the Dover Police Department for placement in their notification binders.
3. **Notify our Parks.** It is recommended that the Dover Police Department notify all city parks and the City Library for all Tier III sex offenders in the City.
4. **Notify Bus Drivers.** It is recommended that the Dover Police Department develop a strategy to educate school bus drivers on the issue of sex offenders in the community.
5. **Private Schools.** It is recommended that all private schools in the City of Dover maintain a sex offender notification binder at their front desks, similar to those maintained by public schools. It is also recommended that the State of Delaware require private schools to maintain such notification binders.

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1. Charge of the Committee
 - ▶ Dispel the Myth
 - ▶ No “Silver Bullet”
2. Complexity of the Issue
 - ▶ Emotional
3. Random Act vs. “Known” Predator
4. Serious Crimes have Serious Consequences
5. Vigilant, but not Vigilantes
6. Definitions/Nomenclature
 - ▶ Sex Offender
 - ▶ Predator
 - ▶ Pedophile
7. Statistics
8. Recidivism
9. Composition: Citizens Committee
 - ▶ No other Government Approaching it like this
 - ▶ Emphasis on
10. Composite Approach
 - ▶ Education/Enforce/Notification
 - ▶ Responsibility of Parents
 - ▶ Solutions are not specific to City Government
11. List of Presenters
12. Educated to Tell Someone
13. What to do if you see Someone

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- I. Intro and Education
 - II. Recommendations
 - III. Re - Appoint Periodically
 - ▶ Monitoring of Progress
 - IV. Appendices
 - ▶ Statistics
 - ▶ Glossary of Terms
 - ▶ List of Presentations
 - ▶ List of Resources
 - ▶ 20 Questions