

# Neighborhood Watchdogs

Meeting Minutes  
August 18, 2020 7-8pm

## Opening

The regular meeting of the Neighborhood Watchdogs was called to order on August 18, 2020 7-8pm via Zoom virtual meeting by Lisa McOmber.

## Present

Guest speaker: Jayson Loreen

Members:

## Open Issues

**Introduction to Guest Speaker:** Deputy Jayson Loreen from the Whatcom County Sheriffs' Dept. He was invited to address community concerns brought forth by the NW members: Security Systems, Drug Activity, Garbage/Vehicle dumping and Vandalism.

Deputy Loreen informed the group that because of upcoming budget cuts of 10%, that as early as October of this year, he may not be working in the Maple Falls area. Recently retired law enforcement officers are not being replaced at this time resulting in a shortage of manpower throughout the county.

**Security Systems recommended:** Arlo, Ring, SVC3, Simplisafe. Arlo was recommended by the deputy as a system that is capable of forwarding video and pictures directly to the officer. Ring was also recommended by some. A comparison will be provided for all options to members at a later date.

**Drug Activity:** Topics discussed included residents witnessing drug activity in their neighborhoods and abandoned homes and properties being used for drug drop zones.

- **Recommendations:** Be an observer and document license plate #'s, addresses where activity is taking place, description of persons involved, time of day, dates and any other pertinent details. Call law enforcement immediately.
- **Do Not:** Confront or engage with someone breaking the law or committing a crime. Do not attempt to take pictures of the activity to avoid being seen.

Deputies will do a "Knock and Talk" to homes with drug activity. They will inform that residents that they know they are selling drugs and that the community is watching them. This can be a good deterrent.

- **Challenges:** Currently, after a suspect is arrested and booked into jail, they are released by the courts w/o bail and allowed to return to their homes often the very next day. A lot of enforcement focus is on the larger cities where many of the big dealers are. Most of the drugs being distributed in our area are manufactured in the Sedro Woolley area and transported up Hwy 9 into our community. Skagit County is outside of our local law enforcement jurisdiction.

**Crime Stats:** A member asked for more detailed reports on where crimes are being committed. Jayson will provide more detailed reports at a later date.

**Mental Issues:** A member wanted to discuss the mental issues in our community, suggested a mental health clinic is needed in our area. A member shared that he met with a Mental Health Officer during a meeting that informed him of their role in our community when referred by Law Enforcement or Fire on chronic, well known cases in our area. This is a resource we were not aware of previously. Details can be discussed at a later date. A member mentioned that when 911 is called, a red flag is placed on these situations for future referral. Help can only be given to persons who are willing to receive it. It cannot be forced on them.

*If you encounter a mental health situation that could cause harm to the person involved or others, Call 911 Immediately!*

**Speeders:** A member shared concerns about speeders travelling close to 40-50 mph on Oregon Trail. Recommendation: Get as much information on the car and driver as you can (license plate, vehicle description, time of day passing by, etc.) This information can be useful in setting up a sting with local motorcycle patrols or other enforcement in the area.

- **Challenge:** Sometimes motorcycle patrols will come up to the area and sit for hours and only see a few cars pass by.

**Abandoned Vehicles:** A member asked about the process to get the abandoned vehicles removed in a timely manner.

- **Process:** Junk/Scrap cars – Initial call to law enforcement results in paperwork being filled out and filed with Whatcom County. Registered owners must be notified and given 15-20 days to respond. If the vehicle is not removed, the vehicle will be picked up by a scrapper and removed. Vehicles that are traceable and in working condition will only sit for 3 days before being towed.

**Abandoned Homes:** If properties are empty and being used by squatters call law enforcement to check out the situation and file a report. An attempt will be made to contact the legal owner of the property and inform them of the situation. Currently, many of the properties are being bought up by builders willing to pay cash to the owners. They then clean up and tear down the homes to build new homes in the area. People who don't care about fines can create a problem for local authorities and cannot be forced to sell. Liens cannot be placed on property. The Department of Health can get involved.

**Garbage:** Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, many residents are not able to afford garbage service. This has created a problem in the community with residents dumping large amounts of waste along the roads in our neighborhoods and in their yards. Some are placing old appliances on the road with a "Free" sign on it, hoping it will be picked up. Others have noticed needles and other dangerous items in the garbage along the roads.

- **Suggestions:** A member suggested we bring in large dumpsters on a monthly, quarterly basis and allow residents to use them to dispose of their garbage as a deterrent. The group decided that this was not a good idea due to the fact that the dumpsters could be used to dump illegal items such as oil, paints, toxic

materials and would encourage people to hold on to their garbage to avoid paying for disposal creating an even greater problem.

- **Solution:** The group decided to focus on 3-4 blight properties, use a local truck and solicit volunteers to help form a clean-up committee. Pick up days would be kept quiet as not to alert the community and a day would be spent by the volunteers picking up garbage in these identified areas.
- **Challenge:** Funding to support the disposal costs. A member suggested someone reach out to the head of Solid Waste and see if funds are available to donate for our efforts. A member offered to contact Aly R. with the Dept. of Health to see if we could get funding due to the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on our community.

Two members have a list of “*blight properties*” that can be reviewed for the next meeting.

A member Suggested efforts be made as a community to petition the County Council to address our needs as taxpayers. We will discuss this in further detail at future meetings.

**Needles:** If needles are found on the ground, please call one of these gentlemen (Carl McDaniel or Jayson Loreen). They are equipped to safely dispose of them with emergency kits. Do NOT attempt to pick up dirty needles or garbage that may cause serious injury.

**Jayson Loreen: 360-599-8481 cell or Carl McDaniel: contact via instant message on Nextdoor.**

**Lisa: Recruiting Volunteers** – We currently have around 30-35 members and are getting new members almost daily. We now have a Facebook Page where we can post videos and comments. Check out our new group page: *Neighborhood Watch Dogs Group*.

**#1 Goal: *Build a strong presence in our community... Spread the word!***

***Thank you all for being a part of this and for all you do!***

### **Agenda for Next Meeting**

Roles and Responsibilities: Our next meeting will be focused on organizing our group leadership teams  
Funding follow-up: WSDOH, Solid Waste, District Map Distribution, Security System Handout

### **Adjournment**

Meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm by Lisa McOmber. The next general meeting will be at 7pm on Sept 15th, via Zoom.

Minutes Submitted By: Lisa McOmber