



Neighborhood Watchdogs

Meeting Minutes November 10, 2020 7:00PM

Facilitator: Lisa McOmber

Secretary: Amanda Nelson

Guests: Whatcom County Sheriff Deputies – R. Rathburn & J. Loreen, Fire District #14 Lt. David Moe

Attendees:

MEETING NOTES:

- The Watch Dogs have noticed a substantial increase in members over the past month. The group started with 15 members in August of 2020 and have now increased to 220 members after starting a new Facebook Group online.
- A request has been made to our local Fire Hall to use their new conference room for training for members in January of 2021. Lt. David Moe explained that they cannot open the space for public use until we have entered STAGE 3 of the coronavirus restrictions. Updates will be provided as this changes.
- The Watch Dogs need community members who want to support the group, to select one or more roles that they can actively participate in to help their neighborhoods and communities. The following are areas we need help with:

Block Captains

Committee Members for special projects

Volunteer Organizers and block captain assistants

Clean Up Crews

Administrative Assistants

“NEW” ADOPT-A-BLOCK Program: We have GREAT news to share! The Neighborhood Watch Dogs have been approved to begin an “Adopt-a-Block” program in our community. Whatcom County Health Dept. partnering with Public Works and our Watch Dogs, have agreed to provide the Watch Dogs with safety equipment, a secured dumpster and will pay for the removal of trash along our neighborhood streets. Volunteers are needed for this project as we intend to provide “unannounced” clean ups each month to keep our community free of trash along the roads. ***Please join us in this tremendous effort to improve our community!***



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MEMBER CONCERNS:

Of the 200 members signed on to our new Facebook account. 68 new members recently screened listed the following as their primary concern as a resident living in the Columbia Valley area:

1. Theft & Property Crimes
2. Drug Use

Deputy R. Rathburn, with the Whatcom County Sheriff's Dept. (WCSD), noted that there are several programs available for citizens struggling with addiction, however most of these programs are located in Bellingham and are not easily accessible.

It was noted that unless people want the help, neither the community nor law enforcement can force them into recovery. Law Enforcement can and do hold individuals who commit crimes and break the law accountable by booking and charging them, where the courts can then order those individuals into treatment.

One program available to county residents is LEAD – Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion, which aims to reduce opioid abuse and reduce the number of overdose fatalities. LEAD holds considerable promise as an alternative to jail for low-level drug crimes. Bringing stakeholders together in a collaborative manner will best serve those in need of services and at the same time help communities respond to public order issues.” LEAD is not a human services program, but a public safety and order program that uses human resources tools. The goal of LEAD is to improve community health and safety by reducing criminal justice system involvement through use of specific human resources tools that are coordinated effectively with law enforcement and with community input.

Our Local Law Enforcement's role is to deter and react to crime. Neighborhood Watch Dogs can assist local law enforcement by observing and calling in ALL suspicious behavior and crimes. Reporting helps our community by creating a record of activity in our area where future funding may be applied and provide more enforcement assistance in our community.

What Watch Dogs can do to help deter crime:

- Team up and go on regular and random patrols in your neighborhoods
- Report any and all suspicious behavior and activities
- Document suspect description, address, time of day, and circumstances
- Take photos or videos when safely possible. These can be used to file charges against criminals
- Report ANY home address where suspected drug sales are occurring and report it to law enforcement

NOTE: NEVER put yourself or others in harms way or in a dangerous situation.

Message from our local Fire Department:

Lt. David Moe has requested that homeowners and renters have furnaces and fireplaces/woodstove chimneys cleaned before winter use. **We have had 4 fires in a month due to dirty furnaces!**



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FUTURE GOALS:

Watch Dogs discussed ways to partner with neighborhoods in our community to provide unity and improve the security and quality of life for all of our members. The following were some of the ideas the members came up with:

- Quarterly programs for communities: Community Garage Sales and events where proceeds go toward flower seeds to plant at entrances and around the bus stops as well as to purchase graffiti clean-up spray.
- Assign Block Captains and volunteers to elderly members in their neighborhoods. Building a list of elderly in their areas that they can watch out for in the event of power outages to help with meals, blankets and to build a fire, etc. to offer rides or assist with yard work or shovel snow when needed.
- Schedule unannounced monthly clean-ups around our neighborhoods with volunteer groups
- Host an annual MEET and GREET for the community with Watch Dog members, Law Enforcement and Fire in August.
- Partner with other local groups working together to help our neighborhoods and bring in new Watch Dog members and volunteers.

OUR NEXT MEETING:

Tentatively our next meeting is scheduled on December 8th at 7PM. Some members may not be available at this time, so we may put out a Doodle Poll to members to see if there is a better day where everyone is available.