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**IN ATTENDANCE AT SEPTEMBER PUBLIC SAFETY MEETING:**

25 people attended the September safety meeting, including:

- ***Peggy Denby*** - Moderator
- ***Lt. Ewing*** – Midtown Mini-Precinct
- ***Lt. Trudy Boyce*** – Atlanta Police Department HOPE team
- ***Sgt. Cooper*** – MPSA Patrol Coordinator

**MAIN TOPIC: DANGEROUS STREET PEOPLE**

We selected this topic because of the numerous reports from the Midtown community about seriously problematic street people. We asked Lt. Trudy Boyce of the Atlanta Police Department to speak to Midtown residents on how APD and the Midtown community can work together on this issue. She heads the HOPE Team (Homeless Outreach and Panhandling Enforcement), a department focusing on the street people problem in our area.

According to the manager of a local coffee shop the street people problem is not only a daily routine, but they are also becoming more aggressive, more menacing, and more persistent. They routinely come to work in the morning to find a vagrant sleeping on the patio furniture. Some of the vagrants persist all day long in aggressively begging for money from customers, and become belligerent when they refuse.

The street people also frequently harass passers-by. On one morning this individual cursed the "boot camp" people who had just come from the park for the morning exercise program. The response from APD is typically very slow in these situations.

Another individual in attendance has had three encounters with dangerous street people in the last two months, each with a different perpetrator. .

- One morning at 7:30am a street person began calling him derogatory names (related to sexual orientation)\* and then threatened to kill him. [\*we omit these terms because they trigger spam filters]
- In another incident, this time where he lives, a street person was begging from across the fence. The subject became enraged when he was refused money and asked to go away. The subject further came into the fenced-in

patio and yelled threats, and said to the effect of that he will beat them before police can get there.

- In the third incident, at the coffee house above, the subject was talking loudly. He became violent when he was asked to leave. He then hit the victim in the face and knocked him down, thereby inflicting a black eye and a sprained wrist.

The basic nature of these menacing incidents poses a serious, ongoing quality-of-life issue among many. The incidents experienced by these individuals are just a few examples of what we are hearing about regularly. The abundance of street drugs makes the high volume of street people an even more serious issue. Combine those two situations with our serious shortage of police personnel, and we have serious safety and quality of life issues.

As we have said before, we support a compassionate response to the homelessness problem. But social services for this population must be managed properly. Many groups, especially church groups drawing suburban support, do not acknowledge the broader aspects of this dreadful issue even if they understand them. Situations like this show why dealing with the homeless is not a simple matter of feeding and warehousing them. Effectively addressing this issue requires extensive social work, and there need to be significantly more efforts in this crucial aspect.

***Response from APD on this issue:***

Lt. Boyce told us that the Atlanta Police Department is training 20% its force in crisis intervention for situations involving street people. Currently the HOPE Team has only three officers for the entire city, who handle homeless and street people issues. Their work involves crisis intervention and steering (especially problematic) homeless / street people into mental health services.

The biggest challenge for the HOPE team lies in the dire lack of resources to effectively deal with mental health issues. The police are forced to take a largely criminal justice approach to the issue just to get them off the streets for some period of time. But sooner or later – usually sooner – they will be back on the streets again. Ideally our public safety mechanisms would be able to force them to choose appropriate therapy or be put through the justice system. At any rate we cannot have this ongoing problem on our streets.

As for how the neighborhood can help the Atlanta Police Department and especially the HOPE Team: when we identify a problematic street person we need to alert her as soon as possible. They will then be on the look-out for the said individual, and work to remove the individual from the area or steer him/her into mental health or other services.

When reporting an episode in progress it is best to call 911 immediately and make it clear that the **situation is in progress**, and explain why to the 911 operator. Terms to use in these instances include things like

- trying to assault me/us
- Breaking in (as we speak)
- acting dangerously irrational
- has weapon

Prioritization will be influenced by the degree to which it appears that a dangerous situation is in progress. A vagrant with a knife will get higher priority than a situation of a vagrant camping in your back yard. If the act is completed the prioritization will likely be influenced by the seriousness of the crime, the likelihood that the culprit could be immediately captured, and/or the likelihood that other people could be in danger.

At the end of the meeting Lt. Boyce described our efforts as a “dream neighborhood watch program,” and Lt. Ewing agreed with her. Well, we try...

### STREET DRUGS

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported that the new Narcotics division is now up and running. Ever since the tragic Neal Street situation the narcotics division has been largely inactive. Drug activity has certainly increased, and with utter impunity for that matter.

The increase of violent incidents reported to the police can likely be tied in with the absence of drug enforcement. Shootings seem to have increased this year in that area, including some homicides.

We are optimistic that we will see a turn-around in the coming months.

### COURT WATCH

Tywang McCoy, whom many people have recently reported to us as fondling himself at women (and even exposes himself according to some reports), had a court hearing October 8th on unrelated charges of credit card theft. The judge raised his bond from \$2500 to \$10,000. Arrest reports in the case alleged that he had two different credit cards with two different names.

Sharla Jackson of the Fulton County DA's office and Sgt. Cooper of MPSA Patrol are working on bringing more cases against this individual. We want to see this individual off the streets and into therapy.

### MPSA PATROL ACTIVITY (SUMMARY)

- One individual arrested on a Union City arrest warrant
- 2 arrested for drinking in public in separate incidents

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- Suspicious person arrested
- Criminal Trespass @ Midtown Tire, entering auto
- Public indecency - 788 Juniper
- Public indecency - 3rd and Juniper
- Public indecency - 7th and Penn
- Shoplifting - 689 PDL Shell
- There were three back-to-back auto break-ins during the early evening hours. Sgt. Cooper urges Midtowners not to leave anything in their car. When will they ever learn?

### ***Also from the MPSA Patrol logs:***

There was an attempted robbery at the KFC around 10pm. The subject was described as a black male with dreadlocks, around 5'8" in height. The incident was captured on in-house surveillance video but did not yield a good picture of the suspect. The suspect put the silver handgun to the cashier's head and demanded money. Sgt. Cooper spoke with the robbery investigator about similarities with recent pedestrian robberies. Both will consult with Zone 5 investigators on the issue.

At 1:30pm MPSA Patrol arrested a prostitute at 3rd and Piedmont who was throwing rocks at the complainant's window. She will prosecute.

Immediately afterwards a 911 call went into the system about two suspicious persons in the street. A regular beat car intercepted two juveniles in the street at 7th and Argonne. One had a BB gun, and the other had a pistol. They had been breaking into cars all along. Based on our experience with juvenile cases we imagine they were released immediately.

The owner of a business called MPSA Patrol about a drugged-out white male in her store.

An ambulance was summoned for the individual, who then took the subject to Grady.

**MPSA MAILBAG** – Do not necessarily represent the views of the MPSA, nor have we assessed the accuracy. Mailbag items are usually edited for flow and removal of identifying information.

### ***Police insensitivity to neighborhood issues***

*I wanted to ask for your help regarding the APD as their actions Friday night really bothered me. At 3:24 on Friday night, I was woken up by a very loud prostitute on my corner. I got up and went outside with my two dogs and started following her (him). She called the police on me and I had three officers in three different cars stop me and ask me what I am doing.*

*A few minutes later, I called the police on a vehicle that was cruising as I had seen it pass me twice in the past four minutes. I only call in legal violations and I call in all legal violations. The dispatch asked what I was doing and I said I was following prostitutes around. She said "If you are following the prostitutes than you are the aggressor."*

*During the hours I spent walking around, I saw two prostitutes get picked up. Each time I called in the vehicle's license plate number, model, color and driver description. The second time, I had actually called the vehicle in for cruising and called back two minutes later about a prostitute being picked up by that car. I later saw the MPSA car and he had seen the dispatch on me following prostitutes, but was not aware of the dispatch on the cruising vehicles or the prostitute pickups - the second of which I had just called in and the vehicle drove right by the MPSA patrol and could have been picked up with a prostitute in the car if the dispatch had been put it out. I am quite upset right now. I have 3 cops talk to me about walking the streets in my neighborhood and no one goes after the prostitutes and cruising johns that are breaking the law and for which I document specific crimes and give specific descriptions.*

*What is going on? This is our neighborhood. I have done everything a citizen can do - join MPSA, secure house with an alarm, own big dogs, actually get up in the middle of the night to protect our streets (which makes me tired the next day but for my wife, neighborhood and my unborn child I will do it any time) and the ones who can do something about the crime send three cars after me and not a single car after the John getting a blow job in a car I called in and identified?*

*I hope that you can talk to APD to let them know two things: 1. If anyone gets up and walks around with the prostitutes, they are not the "aggressor" and a prostitute calling in a non-crime should be ignored (if I had committed a crime, then by all means it should be called in). 2. If someone gives a tip that the police can act on such as the cruisers and the pickups put that on your dispatch!*

**MPSA response:** The prostitute gang will often make fictitious 911 reports on residents as a strategy for standing their ground. They certainly will not tell the 911 operator that they are a prostitute – they will give the impression that a crazy man is stalking a female or something similar. The officer on the beat does not know what exactly what transpired in the 911 call – he only knows how the 911 center presents it to him. Therefore the officer is on the lookout for a “crazy man menacing some innocent female walking down the street.”

When dealing with this kind of conflict remain calm, and be careful not to give the appearance of agitating the situation. Simply observe and report. Also understand that 911 operators probably deal with the craziest people calling 911 on each other all day and night long.

**A week later from same neighbor.**

*I hope that the MPSA can help me through whatever means you have to give a big thank you to Officer Nagel. He just arrested [Prostitute #18] for solicitation of sex on 3rd St. between Piedmont and Myrtle. [Prostitute #18] is the one who was so loud on Friday night that my wife and I were woken up at 3:28 AM and the one I followed around on Friday night. [Prostitute #18] is the one who called the police on me while I followed him around Friday night and was vulgar in his threats he made on me and my "mangy mutts."*

*I am very glad that [Prostitute #18] is facing justice. If there is any way that we can find out about his trial, even though it is a small charge, I am sure that I and some of my neighbors would like to attend in order to express our concern with someone who told me after being arrested "you will have to deal with me again because I will be right back out here working the streets in no time." I will do anything to delay his return as he is one of the most aggressive and foul prostitutes walking the streets of Midtown.*

*Thanks again to Officer Nagel. I will be there at the MPSA meeting and please let me know how I can thank APD and specifically Officer Nagel.*

**MPSA response included:** Next time you have someone arrested please capture the police report number - police officers will normally give you that information at the scene upon direct request. With that number we can pull the police report about a week later. It also helps to get as much information about the case as possible. This could be name of suspect, name of the officer

In all likelihood this subject was arrested on a city charge, meaning they are processed quickly in the city jail. They usually get out quickly, and the case is usually resolved quickly with a sentence of "time served." In order to effectively court watch a city case we have to act quickly. A state-level charge will usually give us adequate time to request extra attention from prosecutors. But a city-level charge is normally just a minor inconvenience for this prostitute gang.

**Noise on Peachtree**

*Help! I live on the corner of 6th and Peachtree Street in the 696 building at Cornerstone Village. The weekend traffic has become unbearable. The loud music from cars cruising up and down Peachtree, horns sounding, and people yelling from cars should not be happening at 1:00 AM.*

*In cities like New York and Chicago, there are signs posted and police enforcement to prevent this and offenders are fined. I am sleep deprived most of the time and it is as a result of individuals who do not even live in our neighborhood - I have stood outside and observed the auto tags.*

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*I have contacted the Mayor's office, Atlanta Police Department (a police official promised to have a night supervisor contact me and come out and I haven't heard from anyone), Mary Norwood's office referred me to neighborhood groups, such as Midtown Blue.*

*Bottom line here is that; the Atlanta Police Department is dropping the ball. The party and cruising crowd are able to break the law and someone needs to do their job here. What can I do, short of moving?*

MPSA RESPONSE: We hear this complaint all the time, even though it is not in the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance (MPSA) service area. Our patrol goes up to Juniper, not up to Peachtree Street.

We have this problem because we have so few police officers in Midtown and in the rest of the city. You will often hear that we need 2000 police officers. That number is about 10 years old. In fact, we need more like 3000 and have approximately 1700. Therein lies the problem. We are in need of a major fix for the APD before we will ever have enough officers to improve our Quality of Life in Midtown and elsewhere.

Even with all the "resident funded" patrols, such as the MPSA patrol, we can only deal with the big stuff, due to the lack of APD personnel, and don't have nearly enough time for Quality of Life problems.

We have copied Lt Ewing (Midtown Precinct Commandeer) and Col Mock (Midtown Blue) so they will be aware of your complaint, even though you have contacted them before. However, in the near future, I don't see a solution to this continuing problem. If the City Council reinstated all the step increases due many of our current police officers today, that would at least stop the majority of the attrition. Then, recruitment and training must be stepped up or we will continue as we are for years.

***Shooting near playground full of children*** [Background: this lies outside of the MPSA area but the circumstances are of great concern to us because the drug activity in that area affects our neighborhood too. This went to a police official] *I live [on] Morgan Street and I am sure you are aware of the reported open gunfire that took place at the playground on the corner of Boulevard and Morgan St. This incident took place at approximately 4:15pm! The playground was full of little children at the time. Typically my [child] is outside playing around that time also.*

*During the shooting, a couple of the perpetrators ran down Morgan St with gun in hand and fled to [a house where a drug dealer reportedly lives]. I am very concerned about the activity taking place at this house. The resident works the Boulevard as a drug solicitor!!! Yesterday's incident must be investigated! I am*

*certainly not comfortable with the perpetrators living on my street! I fear retaliation and possibly more harm occurring.*

*Please investigate the activity occurring at this house.*

**Break-in on Vedado**

*Our house was broken into [date unknown] during which a laptop and DVD player were stolen. The break in occurred on Wednesday, between 4 and 5PM when we were away from the house. The burglar broke two panes of glass out from our side door on the south side of the house and entered through the relatively small hole. This is the most secluded side of the house, with no direct line of sight to any street or neighbor. All of our doors have deadbolts, making the bad guy exit through the same hole he entered. So I guess that limited the size of goods he could run away with.*

*The most disconcerting thing is that he was clearly observing us as we left the house to take the kids to an appointment. We were only gone for about an hour, during which time he did all his business.*

*Not that it would have kept him from breaking in, or even stealing our things, but our big mistake was that we had not set our alarm. This would have clearly put more pressure on him to exit as quickly as possible.*

*I think we were very fortunate in that we did not return to find him in the house, as well as having had relatively few things stolen. It could have been much worse.*

*I encourage you all to keep valuables away from direct window view and to turn on your alarms whenever you leave. If anyone has any ideas of how we can limit this kind of crime in our neighborhood, I'd be very interested in joining a discussion.*

*Let's keep our eyes and ears open.*

**Suspicious foot traffic**

*I live [in the neighborhood]. Sunday afternoon I was sitting on my porch when 3 crackheads came walking down my driveway. I immediately got up and asked them what they were doing, where they were going and strongly advised them never to even think about using my driveway as a short cut again. One had the nerve to ask me if I knew where Argonne is (yes, I know where it is, get the h\*\*l out of my driveway). I think they got the message. There was one white female, one black female, and one black male, all probably early 30's.*

**Prostitute arrest**

*There was a really good bust this morning on the side of my house. A man had picked up one of the transvestite prostitutes and was being "serviced". We got up early to go to work and noticed the car parked right behind his truck. We called MPSA, the cops showed up too, and the guy and the prostitute were both arrested. The cops found loaded weapons in the man's car. The car was impounded and the man and the prostitute were both taken to jail. We hadn't had action [near Penn and 7th] for a while although we used to be a very frequent visiting spot. I hope the word gets out that we are not a good place to park.*

**STAY SAFE! Please encourage your neighbors to join the MPSA! Please join if you haven't yet!**

***- Your Neighbors at the Midtown Ponce Security Alliance***

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