

Citizen Comments Made at the May 30, 2006 Board of Police Commissioner's Meeting

Rick Osborn

I would also like to **thank** the police department for apprehending the alleged perpetrators of Robert's murder.

The **purpose** of my comments is to **save lives**.

After research and interviews focusing on violent crime, including some of the people in this room

Our Conclusion is simple:

The police department needs help and more support.

This is based on comparing the department's mission with community conditions.

Our initial violent crime analysis highlighted mission-critical concerns in:

1. Performance
2. Systems

3. Accountability

First, there is a performance gap:

Violent crime conditions in Kansas City are unacceptably high

Rankings tell the story:

- 5th in the nation in homicides per capita last year
- 46th in security among the top fifty cities
- perennially ranked among the most violent cities among ICMA's cities between 300,000 and 900,000

Trends are even more disturbing:

Significant gaps exist between Kansas City and the average of other cities our size. We don't seem to be able to do what other cities can do.

- Progress against violent crime stagnates, actually rising slightly in the last three years.
- Violent crime clearance rates continue to deteriorate.

- Citizen satisfaction with the overall feeling of safety is at a five-year low.

We examined the pattern of homicides over the last eleven years and found that **Kansas City is a tale of two cities.** South of the river has over seven times the homicide rate as north of the river. In the South, the homicides are very concentrated in one area that we call the corridor of death.

- Six zip codes out of about fifty in the City account for over half the homicides in the last eleven years.
- The crime is so high in these areas that it violates the human rights of the citizens who live there. The Commission has a moral responsibility to solve this problem.

Secondly, there is a **systems problem**

The **Criminal Justice System** allows too many criminals to go free. The system is dysfunctional and not structured for rationality.

- There is no deterrence, the severity, swiftness, and certainty of punishment!
- Our analysis suggests that less than five percent of the criminals who commit violent crimes are convicted and imprisoned

- Citizens do not report all crime nor tell what they know about crime.
- A substantial number of violent offenders are **NOT** arrested, prosecuted, or punished.

The criminals should live in fear, not the citizens. We sort of have the opposite situation in Kansas City.

Thirdly, there is an **Accountability** issue:

Who is responsible for the criminal justice system's results? The lack of coherence is startling.

What do we need to do?

Increase deterrence.

Reinforce the fundamentals:

1. We need more help from citizens. Citizens need to report more crime and cooperate with law enforcement inquiries.
2. Arrest more criminals and enhance investigative effectiveness, (with more technology for instance).

Adopt a **TAKE IT TO ZERO** attitude as part of a Safe Streets, Safe City agenda. There are five components:

One, Set a strategic direction that fosters management by results.

Two, Practice positive policing, a zero tolerance approach to crime based on “broken-windows theory. Pursue minor “quality of life” crimes with the same vigor as violent crimes.

Three, Remove known criminals. Conduct frequent arrest sweeps of warrant and parole violators.

Four, Target more resources to high-risk areas (such as the corridor of death). Deploy police resources according to demand.

Five, Encourage citizen participation. Keep neighborhoods safe with citizen involvement.

Research suggests that the cost of crime exceeds the cost of incapacitation. In the long run, the city will save money with a TAKE IT TO ZERO attitude.

Please examine the corridor of death in our handout. Appendix A vividly demonstrates that we are not solving a major crime problem.

IT IS TIME TO STOP MAKING EXCUSES.