



NORTH CAROLINA POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, INC.

A Division of Southern States Police Benevolent Association, Inc.

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February 9, 2010

Dear Huntersville Commissioners:

As you consider the future of a new Huntersville Police Department facility, I am hopeful that you will welcome my safety concerns with the existing facility as an elected representative of an employee association representing a significant majority of sworn police employees. This is not intended to influence a decision on the specific type of facility being considered, as I understand this to be a very complicated budgetary issue. This is intended to make you aware of the safety hazards with the existing building because it does not have sufficient room to appropriately detain criminal offenders, interview victims and witnesses, or store equipment safely.

Due to the nature of police work, there are times when investigations require detaining criminal offenders at the police station for short periods of time. These detentions are not uncommon, and the existing building does not have the appropriate facilities to conduct these investigations safely. Officers typically have to seat offenders in workspaces occupied by other employees or visitors, and this can be disruptive and potentially dangerous for employees working on unrelated assignments. It can also hinder the investigation by exposing the offender to stimulus not related to the investigation. The space that is used in these circumstances is inconsistent and is usually dictated by what other activities are going on in the building.

Providing privacy for citizens is also a concern with the existing building as there is no place to conduct private interviews. Citizens coming to the police station are often the victim or witness of a crime, and when an officer meets with them to collect information, providing privacy to these citizens is a critical part of the investigation. Unfortunately, with the limited space in the current building sometimes these meetings are conducted in areas where visitors or coworkers in the building have the potential to unintentionally overhear their comments. This could interfere with their desire to make candid statements about sensitive issues that may prove to be critical to the investigation later.

Finally, the storage and records space in the building is exhausted; hallways have become a temporary storage area for bulky items and police records. The safety issue with items being stored in hallways is that it alters the intended size of the hallway and could make evacuation of the building in an emergency more difficult for employees.

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To reiterate, while I am not aware of all of the potential implications your decision may have on future budgets, I am hopeful that your decision in this matter would also consider what is needed to sustain staffing levels to effectively provide police services to the citizens of Huntersville and provide the safest work environment possible for employees. Please feel free to contact me at 704-975-2610 if any further comments can be offered that may be helpful in this process.

Sincerely,

Tom Slymon
North Mecklenberg PBA Chapter President