



# City of Milwaukee

200 E. Wells Street  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
53202

## Meeting Minutes PRIVATE ALARM SYSTEMS TASK FORCE

**ALD. ROBERT PUENTE, CHAIR**

**Ald. Willie Hines, Jr., Richard Pfaff, Ann McCarthy, David Stanosz, Raymond Statis and Christopher Utter**

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Wednesday, February 17, 2010

11:30 AM

Room 301-A, City Hall

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*Meeting convened: 11:32 A.M.*

*Ed Ehrlich present for the City Attorney's Office.*

*Alex Runner also present for Pres. Hines.*

**Present** 6 - Puente, Hines Jr., Pfaff, Statis, Utter and McCarthy

**Excused** 1 - Stanosz

### 1. Introduction of Members.

*Members briefly introduced themselves and their affiliations.*

### 2. Appearance by Jim Owczarski, Deputy City Clerk, relating to open meetings and open records law.

*Mr. Owczarski spoke on this issue and answered questions from members.*

### 3. Goals and objectives of the Task Force.

*This matter was taken up first due to Pres. Hines's schedule.*

*President Hines spoke on this matter and what he sees as the role of this task force in creating its recommendations. The alarm companies should comply with city policies and, at the same time, the city policies should take into consideration the concerns of the alarm companies. After making these remarks, Pres. Hines left, leaving Alex Runner to attend the meeting as his alternate.*

*Ald. Puente said that he thinks the Task Force will be looking at the sales techniques of companies who may be pressuring elderly customers and possibly extending the time to cancel a contract from the current three days to 10 or 30 days.*

*He is also concerned about many of the businesses which are located outside of Milwaukee or the state and the city's policy of not serving individuals outside of the city. He's also concerned about companies which subcontract to security companies,*

*which do not perform as they're supposed to.*

*Mr. Pfaff said that in 2007 an administrative group met and discussed the possible need for an independent board to be created that could impose monetary punitive measures on companies and make recommendations to the Public Safety Committee. Mr. Pfaff will research this and get back to the Task Force on the issues that were looked at/discussed in 2007. The concern was also mentioned at that time that there is no licensing requirement or background check on the companies which respond as the first responders. Mr. Utter agreed that there is an issue with the lack of regulations of first responders. Ms. McCarthy noted that shopping centers and banks that have their own security forces can't use them as first responders due to code restrictions. Mr. Utter also noted that there are 12-15 areas like this in the current legislation that he sees as concerns and said that changing technology, such as video technology, is not addressed in the current legislation.*

*Mr. Pfaff said that another issue is when an alarm has sounded and the homeowner verifies that someone has broken in/is breaking in, but the alarm company cannot call in the alarm unless it has verified it through its first responder that a break-in has occurred. Mr. Utter noted that 90% of all alarms are set off by individuals entering or leaving the establishment, so requiring that alarm companies call customer's cell phones after calling the premises would catch many of them in close vicinity to their properties. The homeowner could then verify whether or not a break-in has occurred. He recommended requiring that companies make two calls - one to the premises and one to the cell phone of the customer.*

*Mr. Utter will use his national contacts to get information/issues to this Task Force. The industry is very excited that these issues are being discussed and he feels that there are four main issues: sales techniques, licensing of companies, training and certification of installers, and non-verified alarm fees and penalties.*

#### **4. Review of current City legislation regulating private alarm systems.**

*Mr. Ehrlich noted that the ordinance was drafted in its entirety, but times have changed and changes can definitely be made. He also noted that Municipal Court is not the proper body to enforce the current legislation as it does not pursue actions at which individuals are not served, which is what the Court typically handles. Per Mr. Ehrlich, it is not equipped to establish jurisdiction over a corporation. Mr. Ehrlich did encourage the discipline arm of this ordinance be removed from Municipal Court.*

*Ms. McCarthy would like to see a change made that if a homeowner has an unlicensed company the homeowner will be sent a letter stating this fact. Ms. McCarthy noted that individuals can buy and hook up alarms from stores and contract with an alarm company and have a functioning alarm system.*

*Mr. Utter will provide members with model codes for their review and future discussion. In June the national alarm regulatory body is creating a Best Practices for alarm companies.*

*Ms. McCarthy noted that the ordinance is very outdated in terms of panic alarms which provide two-way communication. Mr. Utter feels that panic alarms are their own issue and he would prefer to limit discussion to private alarm systems. Ms. McCarthy will research how many panic alarms the city receives. Mr. Runner said that a ranking system for certification of alarm companies might be a good addition to the Code.*

*Mr. Pfaff said that the calls the License Division receives are from individuals who are*

*confused as to whom to even contact when something goes wrong with the alarms as numerous companies, holding companies and installers are involved.*

*Mr. Pfaff noted how this overlaps with other ordinances, specifically those related to direct sellers and door-to-door sellers. The License Division receives complaints about numerous college-age youth being bused in for summer sales efforts. The model for use might be the current home improvement license, so that the sellers are themselves licensed and regulated, rather than just the companies for which they are temporarily selling.*

*Ms. McCarthy also mentioned that some jurisdictions also require that the homeowners get permits to have an alarm installed. Mr. Pfaff noted that the permit is a public document, which could be used to select those individuals to rob.*

**5. Concerns of members, Council members and the public relating to private alarm systems, sales and services.**

*Mike D'Amato was present for Pinnacle Security and said that alarm companies have not made payments to the City because they were unaware of the payments due, not that they were deliberately not paying. He said that he's seen few problems with installation and would like to ensure that this issue isn't over-legislated. He is also concerned about notifying customers of those companies which will no longer be licensed or have their licenses suspended. Mr. Utter suggested suspending the right of the company to sign up new sales, but still allow them to monitor their existing accounts.*

**6. Set next meeting date and agenda.**

*March 11th at 10:00 a.m.*

*Meeting adjourned: 1:15 P.M.  
Linda M. Elmer  
Staff Assistant*