

AQCA Membership Meeting, February 19, 2009, 122 Chestnut Street

The Springfield Clean-Up Day will be May 2. Two people signed up after to help, Jane Devlin and Robert Glasgow.

The Springfield Pancake Breakfast will be on May 16. We shall probably be pouring juice and coffee; there will be more information later.

The guest speaker for the evening was Commissioner of Police William Fitchet:

He brought extra applications for the Citizens Police Academy, and encouraged people to attend.

Fitchet said that his staff are doing things to be involved in the community. They are teaching an awareness and defense class at Central High. Women are often crime victims, and must learn how to protect themselves. The officers also have a youth athletics program, and provide an honor guard at funerals.

The Commissioner operates the department using the "broken window" theory. If you leave the broken windows in the neighborhoods unrepaired, it will appear that people don't care, and there will be even more damage. So, his officers are trying to get to each complaint quickly.

The Quality of Life issues are important to the citizens of Springfield--noise, unshovelled walkways, unusual behavior next door late at night, etc.--. There are now 9 full-time officers, the Flex Squad, who take care of the geographical regions of the city. The police want us all to be "happy in our homes". If anyone notices habitual offenses, please report them to the police!

The overall crime rate has gone down in Springfield. The Commissioner has told his staff never to change the numbers when reporting crimes. He always wants to know exactly what is happening! Cities all have to report major crimes to the FBI---major meaning ones that involve victims. Part of why our statistics are lower is the extraordinary care that the Baystate Medical Center trauma team provide---saving lives.

Commissioner Fitchet claimed that the most violent crimes that the police respond to occur among people aged 17-22. There are hundreds of arrests at the schools each year. During this past February school vacation, there were extra officers on patrol in the city--walking patrols.

In looking forward, the Commissioner wants to make more use of modern forensics, such as DNA, and the new hi-tech cameras. He has obtained the help of the Massachusetts State Police on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights to help cover the city. He is using undercover officers to assist with investigations and subsequent arrests.

One of the biggest problems in the city, Commissioner Fitchet said, was still drugs and gangs. The drugs are coming in from Mexico, and making their way to New England. There is an appetite for drugs, and with the worsening economy, there may be an even greater interest in using.

The Commissioner concluded his presentation by answering questions from the members.

Respectfully submitted, Lynn L. Hallowell, Recording Secretary.