

Royal Oak 'dialogue' focus is safety

ROYAL OAK - A better connection between Royal Oak city government, neighborhoods and businesses is the goal of a first time "community dialogue" planned for June.

City Commissioner Peggy Goodwin is organizing the effort, planned for 6:30 p. m. Wednesday, June 27, in the Royal Oak Middle School Auditorium.

As the school year winds down and local organizations prepare for summer breaks, Goodwin wants to get the word out early so people can save the date.

"City resources are stretched thin with our tight budgets. We need to re-energize the idea of a neighborhood watch. Residents, business owners and visitors are the extra eyes that we need to keep our city vibrant," Goodwin said.

While crime and blight aren't problems in Royal Oak, Goodwin said local attention is what keeps it so.

"The evening is going to be an opportunity for everyone to listen to our speakers and to ask questions," Goodwin explained. "I'm hoping we have a lot of business people there. I want them to have their own watch program."

Fox 2 Anchorman Ron Savage will moderate the evening. Guest speakers will have a few minutes to talk about the agencies they represent and what services are offered. Then Savage will take questions from the audience.

"The topics we're covering are what people talk about in their own circles. We want to enlarge that circle," Goodwin said. "We're going to get people together and arm them with good information."

Panelists include: Royal Oak Interim Police Chief Corrigan O'Donahue, Oakland County Prosecutor Jessica Cooper, Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard, Royal Oak Building Official Jason Craig, plus representatives from the state Department of Corrections, Royal Oak Youth Assistance and the Royal Oak Community Coalition.

Goodwin wants the conversation to include an explanation of what neighborhood watch is, how it works, how to organize one, crime safety tips and how to get or issue neighborhood alerts using technology.

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Chief O'Donahue welcomes any community gathering. He is especially pleased that one of his conversation highlights will be announcing his plans to reinstate a community liaison officer, who will work with neighborhood watch groups.

“Our intention is to build the department a bit,” he said, since budget cuts during the recessionary period resulted in fewer Royal Oak police officers. “I'm going to talk about where we want to go and what services we want to offer in the future.”

He applauds the revitalization of neighborhood groups, saying they provide valuable assistance to the police department, because they can report suspicious behavior. Sharing of information is much easier with neighborhood association groups, because “there is an open channel of communication,” he said.

O'Donahue also will cover a few other topics at the meeting, including the current department structure, crime trends and safety measures.

Reservations are not required for the community meeting. Goodwin said she purposely chose the auditorium, because it seats 300 people.

“We just want people to know it's going to happen and mark it on their calendars. We want a good turnout for this. We have a unique community and I know the people will come together,” Goodwin said.

Anyone with questions may call her at (248) 376-0390 or email her at

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