

Stothert gives citizen patrols an update on Omaha's budget, crime and more

By Paige Yowell / World-Herald staff writer | Posted: Sunday, September 7, 2014 1:00 am

The Omaha Coalition of Citizen Patrols on Saturday heard from Mayor Jean Stothert on everything from crime to road resurfacing.

Stothert gave about 30 representatives from various patrols throughout Omaha a “mini State of the City” address, discussed the budget and fielded questions from members.

She said that while homicides are down this year compared with last year, there have been more property crimes, especially in west Omaha.

A fifth police precinct is in the works, she told the group, and will be added within the next few years. She said Omaha Police Chief Todd Schmaderer was studying what would make the most sense.

As Omaha has expanded west and the city has annexed new neighborhoods, some western neighborhoods have worried that police officers in the large northwest and southwest precincts can be stretched thin. The Police Department currently has four precincts, with the dividing lines at 42nd and Dodge Streets.

The Omaha Coalition of Citizen Patrols has about 35 patrols across the city and adds up to four each year, said President Chris Costantakos. Many patrols form along neighborhood boundaries, but some do not, she said.

The citizen patrol members are not armed and they must attend a special training class, undergo a background check and patrol in pairs in marked cars, Costantakos said.

The coalition members meet on the first Saturday of the month. Costantakos said the group invites the mayor to speak each year.

“I think it’s important for our members to hear what her perception of crime is ... and how we can help her, too,” Costantakos said.

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Jean Stothert

Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert