

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
August 18, 2022 – 3:00 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Councilor Martin Pepin, Chair
 Councilor Kenneth S. Vincent, Vice-Chair
 Councilor Denis Messier
 Councilor Nancie Cameron (arrived at 3:01 p.m.)

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
 Police Chief, Timothy McLin
 Fire Chief, George Kramlinger
 Stewarts Ambulance, Paul Robidas
 Welfare Officer, Kristen LaPanne

Chairman Pepin called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councilor Messier made a motion to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Vincent and passed 3-0.

Councilor Cameron arrived after the passing of the June 23, 2023 minutes.

FIRE, POLICE AND EMS UPDATES

Fire Chief Kramlinger reported that the new Pierce pumper was original scheduled to arrive at the end of October 2022 and has been delayed 3 months with an estimated arrival date for the end of January 2023. Engine-3's motor has been operating extremely well since the completed repairs since putting the engine back in service. Additionally, phase 2 of the new fire station is scheduled to start on Monday.

Police Chief McLin reported The School Resource Officer will be starting back with the school in 2 weeks. Discussion regarding the Dover District Court adding additional days for the prosecutor as well as the Court starting to take probable cause cases. In an effort to relieve he Police Department obligations, the County Attorney has agreed to provide assistance.

Councilor Vincent questioned the reasoning for adding more court dates to which Chief McLin explained that there is a need to catch up on hearings due to the backlogging of cases caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Manager Belmore added that Chief McLin will be attending the IACP Annual Conference in October, Chief McLin gave details about the program.

Manager Belmore informed the Committee that there are two items being added to the Finance Committee Agenda, regarding the replacement of the furnace at the PD and he mentioned that the dispatch center at the Police Department will need replacement next fiscal year. Chief McLin is in the process of requesting furnace replacement quotes and the dispatch center replacement cost estimate is approx. \$170,000 to be added to the FY 2024 Capital Improvement Program. Manager Belmore added

that he has been working with Representative Chris Pappas' staff on the possibility to repurpose the Training Tower approved grant funds to assist in the replacement of the dispatch center.

Councilor Messier mentioned the potential for Unitil to extend their natural gas services to the police department in the future and suggested that when requesting quotes for the furnace replacement, that Chief McLin include the option to switch the system to natural gas.

Chairman Pepin requested an update to the External Carrier Vest Uniform. Chief McLin reported that most of the items are on order and some have started to arrive. Staff are in the process of receiving sizing for pants and shirts which include the sizing for the vests.

Paul Robidas reported that EMS response time is averaging 4 minutes and has been experiencing extremely high volume of calls in which fire and police continue to provide assistance. Paul explained they are experiencing staffing issues like many other departments, but has been retaining employees by offering retention bonuses. Paul is continuing to monitor the staffing as well as ways to continue staffing retention. Paul added that interfacility partnerships have also been helpful when staffing is short.

Councilor Vincent inquired about the amount of COVID related calls EMS is receiving. Paul reported that there has not been as many which he attributes the COVID strains having less severe symptoms and allowing people to stay home to recover along with at home testing kits available. Paul, however, did comment that they are experiencing lengthy offload times at the hospital of roughly 45 minutes to 1 hour where they transfer patients from the EMS truck to the emergency room due to the influx of emergency room crowding; this is impacting the ability for the EMS truck to be readily available for their next call.

POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING

Chairman Pepin began by stating that this discussion is not a time for discussion negotiations for any future union contracts to which Manager Belmore added that the purpose of the discussion is to inform the Committee of the current situation with the Police Department employment recruitment and retention efforts and challenges. Manager Belmore stated that he will be meeting with other City Staff and Chief McLin to discuss potential proposals in order to address the current challenges. Councilor Messier commented that looking over the provided memorandum from Chief McLin, the discussion is expected with other local communities implementing retention and sign-on bonuses.

Discussion ensued regarding emergency calls and what happens if there are not enough Patrol Officers on duty to respond, Chief McLin responded that they would have to rely on mutual aid and noted that they were previously able to rely on State Police for back-up but they are also down officers at this time. McLin referenced his memorandum and expressed the potential need for intense scheduling, 12-hour work shifts and mutual aid. Councilor Messier acknowledged the concern of losing more police officers due to burnout.

Chief McLin reported that currently the Police Department is operating on 3 Patrol Shifts consisting of 8-hour shifts which is becoming increasingly challenging due to the open positions, required trainings, vacations and other personnel type matters. Many officers are working 12-hour shifts in order to cover shifts as needed. In addition, the Patrol Lieutenant, School Resource Officer and Detectives have been covering shifts on a weekly basis. The memorandum provided other challenging factors including area police departments offering retention and recruitment bonuses for Certified Police Officers.

Chief McLin provided recommendations of temporary measures to help relieve the current staffing shortages and added that the City is attracting good candidates but they need to become certified prior to working alone on shifts.

Chairman Pepin acknowledged the Chief's and City Staff's concern with staffing retention and recruitment and assured them that the Committee is taking the issue seriously.

MISCELLANEOUS

Nothing to report

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Messier made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilor Cameron and passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristen LaPanne, Welfare Officer