

Proceedings of the Public Safety Committee

July 21, 2022

6:00 p.m. Gov't Center, Room 204

Members Present: Councilor Elm, Councilor Ledin, Councilor Johnson,

Others Present: Chief Alexander, Chief Gordon, Battalion Chief Tribbey, Lt. Trone,

Some participants joined the meeting via Google Meet: Councilor Van Sickle

Approval of minutes: May 19, 2022

Motion by Councilor Elm, seconded by Councilor Ledin and carried to approve the Public Safety meeting minutes of May 19, 2022

New Business

1. Police Department and Fire Department updates

Chief Alexander : Chief Alexander briefly spoke to the incident involving an off-duty police Sgt. Investigation is on-going. Councilor Ledin asks how the rank and file are dealing with the incident. Chief Alexander says as well as can be expected. An update was given regarding the issues that occurred with the Palace Bar. Chief Alexander says the situation is resolved and that the owners voluntarily relinquished the liquor license on June 30th. Councilor Elm asks as to whether the issues that the Palace faced have now moved to other businesses. Chief Alexander says they have not. He also stated that several establishments reached out to be pro-active about avoiding a situation like the Palace. Councilor Ledin asks if any establishment have been in fear of being shut down. Chief Alexander states that they have not. Councilor Johnson asks about the license enforcement team. Chief Alexander describes the team and what they will be doing. Also discussion regarding the states new policy involving penny machines in bars.

Chief Alexander gave a brief update on the theft issue at Wisconsin Point. He stated that there had been increased patrol presence in the area but no thefts were witnessed. Around 37 hours of enforcement activities have occurred.

Councilor Ledin asks how the rank and file in the police department are doing regarding the incident that Sgt. Swanson was involved in. Chief Alexander states that there are doing as well as can be expected. There have been a few incidences of hostility towards officers. There have also been some phone calls placed to the police department desk.

Chief Gordon: Chief Gordon gives update on how the mental health system within the fire department worked for the E 2nd St incident. He also praised the work that both the fire department and the police department did on that scene. He stated that both departments work very well together.

Chief Gordon gives an update on the drone program at the department. Drones are up. The department has 3 certified pilots. Drones were bought with grants and did not require any taxpayer money. A call out was done for a drone pilot last week to assist in a search. Call out went well but the pilot and drone ended up not being needed for the scene. When drones are need it will be off-duty personnel that are called in.

Car seat clinics are coming back after a hiatus due to the pandemic. First clinic will be on August 4th. Department will be working closely with the Duluth Fire Department to ensure that there will be car seat clinics available in the Duluth/Superior area every two weeks.

There was an offer made to a new hire. Hopefully the newest firefighter will start September 1st. This will bring the department to full staff.

Chief Gordon states that Station 3 is looking great. He encourages councilors to stop by the station and take a look at the building and grounds. He praised the work that the members assigned to engine 3 did. He also states that he hopes it will continue at station 2.

Councilor Johnson asks how the search for funding for the department's mental health system is going. Chief Gordon states that the cost right now is for the app that the department uses. Chief Gordon says that all 7 members involved in the E 2nd St incident utilized the system as well as attended the debrief. He says that the stigma that surrounded firefighter mental health is going away. Councilor Ledin briefly mentions the new Federal Mental Health Crisis line 988.

No action

2. Police Department Annual Report Summary: Chief Alexander begins a summary of the police department annual report for 2021. The department is beginning to transition back to a pre-pandemic response model. More in person contact is continuing. There has also been an increase in self-initiated contacts with the police from the community. Chief Alexander hopes to bring back the citizens academy which has been on hold due to the pandemic. One of the biggest additions to the department has been the Coordinated Response Specialist Jen Stank. General discussion on the strengths the position gives for multiple community members who may interact with her. This may be in lieu of other contacts they may normally have with officers. Some successes have been assisting some homeless to find permanent housing, running the Pathways to Hope program, as well as the overdose outreach program. Approximately 15 people have been assisted and having success while working with Jen.

There has been an increase in civilian staff the last year. A community service officer oversees the online reporting. This helps to free patrol officer resources.

Chief Alexander discusses department training. The minimum training requirement per officer is 24 hours per year. This would add up to 1500 hours of annual training. However, Chief Alexander states that there have been closer to 7,000 hours of training for the department. Some of the training has been assisting with the "soft skills" officers can use as well as de-escalation training and mental health training. Officers also train in their specialty areas.

Staffing issues continued to be a problem. Department is currently 7 officers down. They are swearing in 2 next week with one starting the academy in August and the other entering the field training program. Recruitment issues are a reality. Low numbers for testing. Discussion on ideas of how to stem this problem.

Overdoses continue to be an on-going community issue. There are already more OD deaths this year than all last year. Chief Alexander stated that there has been some success in prosecuting overdose deaths as homicides. However, these investigations take some time. Chief Alexander ends summary.

Councilor Elm discusses that he likes having the annual report in committee. He also asks if there is data that relates to the 15 people the Coordinated Resource Officer has helped. Specifically, has it saved money and resources. No data right now. Chief Alexander states that some clients have called Jen directly rather than calling 911. Councilor Elm then asks if the training hours reported by the department are in line with others in the state. Chief Alexander states that the department is probably

on the high end of training due to ancillary assignments that officers have.

Councilor Johnson says that Jen has had an impact on a class that he teaches at the high school. He feels that hearing things from her has a larger impact. Brief discussion on fentanyl and the possible tainting of THC with fentanyl. Councilor Johnson also praised the work of School Resource Officer Darst. Councilor Johnson asks about active shoot training. He also asks whether going down to two SRO in the district is having any effect on outcomes. Discussion on the School Resource Officer.

Councilor Ledin ask if officers carry Naloxone. Chief Alexander states that they do. He then states that it is mostly grant funded and no cost to the taxpayer. Councilor Ledin then asks about general trends on crime in the city. Chief Alexander says that drugs and alcohol continue to be drivers of crime. However, there is a general decline in crime over the last five years as well as arrests. Councilor Elm asks about repeat Narcan users. Chief Alexander says that there are repeat users. Lt. Trone states that OD deaths are already ahead of last year's total.

Councilor Johnson asks how the Coordinated Response Officer is being received by the rank and file. Lt. Trone answers that she is being very well received. Discussion ensues about online reporting, the DOR system and its use, and VR/online training. Chief Alexander also briefly discusses the over one million dollars in grants the department has secured.

Councilor Van Sickle states that the meeting has already been going for an hour and asks if discussion can be continued at the next meeting.

Motion by Councilor Elm to hold police department annual report in committee. Seconded by Johnson. Motion passes

3. Citizen Traffic Complaint Review: Councilor Van Sickle appears via Google Meet to speak on citizen traffic complain review. Discussion centers around speed and engine breaking on E 2nd St specifically on the 5200 block of E 2nd and the area north of the via duct near Super One. Councilor Van Sickle states she is trying to advocate for constituents and is looking for help with how to work on this problem.

Lt. Trone states that there have been 172 traffic stops in that general area since May. He says that increased presence assists in keeping speed down. The "your speed is" sign has been out on E 2nd. He further states that area officers have been told to look for engine breaking and speed in that area. Chief Alexander asks where the "no engine breaking" signs are. Councilor Van Sickle states that they are all on E 2nd. Lt. Trone states that no engine breaking is a city ordinance. The ticket is currently \$273.00 and goes to the driver of the truck. Chief Alexander speaks to the possibility of hiring extra details to enforce these issues in the areas. Discussion ensues on different ticketing possibilities and the possibility of fining the company. Ordinance will be looked at to see what it exactly says. A review will be done at next meeting.

Discussion about the online citizen reporting system and how that is used to address these types of issues. Specifically, what does it look like on the officers end. Complaint comes in and is assigned to the area officer. There had been an issue with the link but it has been fixed.

Action: receive and file

Councilor Ledin motions to adjourn. Councilor Johnson seconds

Meeting adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

*Respectfully Submitted
Battalion Chief J.A. Tribbey*