

Public Safety Board
February 8, 2024 (3:00 PM) – City Council Chambers

In Attendance:

Mayor Byron Champlin (Guest), Andrew Biemer, Serina Chase (Meeting Minutes), Fire Chief John Chisholm, Jessica Eskeland, Councilor Nathan Fennessy, Councilor Jeff Foote, Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, Carol Hargrove, Deputy Fire Chief Mark Hebert, Justin Kantar (Guest), Steven Kidder, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Ana Mckenna, Deputy Police Chief Barrett Moulton, Police Chief Bradley Osgood, Deputy City Solicitor Danielle Pacik (Guest), Deputy Police Chief Steven Smagula, Deputy Police Chief John Thomas

Welcome from the Chair:

Opening remarks made by Councilor & Chair Amanda Grady Sexton

Introductions:

Introductions made by attending councilors, members, and guests

Approval of October 24, 2022 meeting minutes:

Motion made by Councilor Jennifer Kretovic to approve the October 24, 2022 meeting minutes. Andrew Biemer seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Right to know, noticing, committee purview, and subcommittee rules familiarization by Danielle Pacik, Deputy City Solicitor

Deputy City Solicitor Danielle Pacik provided a brief review of laws and ordinances pertaining to Right to Know and Public Safety Boards to members and guests of the Board.

Department overview and updates from Police:

Police Chief Osgood handed out a report to each board member and explained that he would like to give an overview of some internal goals for the Police Department:

1) Support for Homelessness, Addiction, & Mental Health

First, he noted that City Council approved 2 positions within the Police Department: A masters-level social worker and a bachelors-level social worker. The masters-level social worker started very recently however, the Department is hoping to have the bachelors-level position filled by the end of spring. He is hopeful that these positions will make a positive impact on the community.

2) Social Media

Next, Chief Osgood explained that monitoring and managing the Police Department's social media is a fulltime job in itself. Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton asked "Why doesn't the Department disable

comments?”. It was explained that controlling comments may cause issues pertaining to free speech but that it may also be a good idea to reach out to Public Information Officer Stefanie Breton regarding social media policies.

3) New Police Headquarters

Chief Osgood briefly mentioned that plans for the new police headquarters are still in progress.

4) Staffing Level

Chief Osgood reviewed staffing related statistics within the Police Department. He stated that he has been working with City Council to figure out ways to resolve the issue of decreased staffing.

Questions from the Board:

Several questions were asked in order to better understand the department’s recruitment and promotional processes.

Several clarifying questions were asked regarding plans for the new Police Station.

Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton posed several questions relating to homelessness in Concord, including clarification on the current status of the homelessness issue and if there was a mechanism to track incidents related to a homeless issue.

It was explained that it is difficult for the Police Department to differentiate calls related to homeless issues due to the Department’s current process for tracking calls. It was also mentioned that Human Services Director Karen Emis-Williams might have a way to track this information.

Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton also asked if there was a way to quantify where homeless individuals may be originating from. It was explained that this information is difficult to quantify. Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton then mentioned that it might be helpful to form a subcommittee to further explore these statistics. Councilor Jennifer Kretovic agreed that it would be a good idea to create a subcommittee for this and include the Concord School District, as they collect data on homeless children.

There were additional questions regarding the level of communication between the Police Department and the school district. Chief Osgood stated that he regularly meets with the superintendent and has expressed interest in adding an SRO position at Rundlett Middle School. He also mentioned that the school district has a robust social worker program which will be networked in with the Police Department’s own social worker program. This will aid in information sharing.

Finally, Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton asked Chief Osgood how the committee can be helpful to the Police Department. Chief Osgood mentioned that continuing discussions about the expansion of job opportunities within the Department would be helpful. Chief Osgood mentioned that he would like to add a Police K9 and an additional social worker in the future.

Department overview and updates from Fire:

Fire Chief Chisholm handed out a report to each board member and explained that he would first like to highlight two topics from his report:

1) **Turnover and staffing shortages**

First, he reviewed staffing related statistics within the Fire Department and Fire Headquarters.

2) **Commissioned Study with Additional Recommendations**

Next, Chief Chisholm briefly explained that the Fire Department received a report with recommendations from a commissioned study to assist in the planning of a new fire station and fire headquarters.

The study recommended staffing an additional ambulance out of Central Station, which the Fire Department has since adopted. Through adopting this recommendation, the Department has seen a slight reduction in the strain on the EMS system. However, EMS call volume is still increasing.

Chief Chisolm shared additional statistics relating to turnover and staffing.

He then explained his top priorities for the Department:

1) **Safety and service level**

Chief Chisholm explained that current firefighting gear contains PFAS in its vapor barrier which is known to cause cancer. He stated that he would like the Board's assistance in making a formal recommendation to City Council to transition Fire Department members out of gear containing PFAS and into gear that does not contain PFAS, when it becomes available.

Jessica Eskeland made a motion to move this recommendation to City Council. Councilor Jennifer Kretovic seconded.

There were some additional questions from board members relating to the cost and logistics of purchasing this new gear.

Motion passed unanimously.

2) **Training for Department members**

Chief Chisholm continued that the Department's Fire Prevention Bureau is currently extremely busy and falling behind. Overtime usage within the Fire Prevention Bureau is unavoidable. However, the funds used to pay for this overtime come directly out of suppression and training funds.

As training is one of his top priorities, Chief Chisholm is hoping to hire additional personnel for the Fire Prevention Bureau. This would mitigate the usage of suppression and training funds for the purpose of Fire Prevention overtime.

Additionally, the need for training has been increasingly important as the Department has seen an increase in the hiring of somewhat inexperienced personnel who require additional training. It was mentioned that the Fire Academy has recently scaled back some of their curriculum therefore, the burden of training has fallen onto the Departments.

Chief Chisholm also remarked that time constraints due to increasing call volumes have made it increasingly difficult to conduct on-duty trainings. Therefore, off-duty trainings are crucial.

He also mentioned that it may be necessary to start developing and defining some service levels for the Fire Department.

3) Fire Department Facilities and Maintenance

Chief Chisholm stated that the Fire Department will be increasing efforts into improving and maintaining Fire Department facilities over the next several years.

Chief Chisholm then transitioned to his concerns of rising fire apparatus cost and the lengthy delivery time of such vehicles.

Questions from the Board:

There was a question regarding the life safety and location of the new middle school – Broken Ground.

There was a question regarding the capacity to service all of the new housing units in the City.

Agenda item selection:

- Establishing and collecting data around homelessness and possibly creating a subcommittee to gather data.
- Reaching out to Public Information Officer Stefanie Breton and Deputy City Solicitor Danielle Pacik regarding social media policies around public safety.
- Planning for future service demands – Fire Department.
- Reviewing potential financial items that will be in the upcoming FY25 budget that the Board can help with.

Jessica Eskeland made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Andrew Biemer Seconded. Motion passed unanimously.