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## Public Safety Board

November 21, 2024 (3:00 PM) – City Council Chambers

Meeting Minutes

### **In Attendance**

**Members:** Councilor and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic, Councilor Jim Schlosser, Drew Biemer, Donald Carter, Steve Edwards, Lisa Brown, Natch Greyes

**Staff:** Fire Chief John Chisholm, Deputy Fire Chief Mark Hebert, Deputy Fire Chief Elisa Folsom, Jennifer Miskovic, Police Chief Osgood, Deputy Police Chief Thomas, Deputy Chief Smagula

**Also In Attendance:** Teresa Gladstone, Judi Wishart, Justin Kantar, Ronald Verville, Michelle Laverdure, Anna Cannard, Rebecca Carlman, Michaela Towfighi, Sara Curran, and Ole Olson

**Minute Taker:** Jennifer Miskovic

### **Welcome from the Chair**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00pm by Councilor and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton

### **Introductions**

Introductions were made by attending councilors, members, guests, and public attendees.

### **Approval of September 19, 2024 meeting minutes**

A Motion made by Natch Greyes to approve the meeting minutes from September 19, 2024, as written.

Seconded by Drew Biemer. Motion Passed unanimously.

Councilor and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton asked if the attending public would like to comment before the agenda items were brought up for discussion.

Michelle Laverdure,, an unhoused individual and homeless advocate came to make the board aware that they have noticed an increase in crime and vandalism as people are forced into smaller areas and encampments are dispersed, the extreme length of waiting lists at shelters, and the desperate need in the unhoused community for temporary housing for the winter months.



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Rebecca Carlman, a homeless advocate, spoke in agreement with the urgent need for temporary housing as the weather gets colder.

It was stated that even a place to park RV's and campers to set up, would be useful to the unhoused. The board was asked if the City of Concord currently has a plan to designate city land for the unhoused to go during these winter months. That is not something the board is aware of.

Teresa Gladstone updated the board about the progression of the project of the tiny house transitional community. As of 11/20/2024 the paperwork for her 501c3 was submitted and can take up to a year. Teresa and the board discussed the vision, safety concerns, and goals for a tiny house/pallet home community, including numbering of houses, code of conduct, local and state agencies including the County Sheriff's office, CATCH Housing and The Community Actions Program. It was noted that all regular permitting processes would have to be done and presented to the public at that time.

Justin Kantar, President of the Firefighters Union Local 1045 IAFF, spoke to the board regarding retention problems. There are 72 non-supervisory positions within the Fire Department, currently there are 66 positions filled. Nine firefighters are eligible to retire currently. There are no or very few candidates to fill those vacancies. The firefighters are tired. The current model is unsustainable, and the fire department is getting by, hoping that the firefighters see the bigger picture and the importance of being there filling shifts for the community members. People are regularly working 72 or more hours per week and the industry is sinking. Concord has great firefighters; all members of the Fire Department are trying to come together to help keep the industry afloat in Concord and find solutions to improve recruitment and retention. Now is the time the firefighters need the PSAB to champion and help support the firefighters and the department. About 20% of the total fire department is eligible for retirement, if that were to happen, the department wouldn't be able to sustain it. Concord has not grown as far as staffing, to meet the increase demand for services as the city has grown, as the population has aged. The department has struggled to allow on duty time for training because of call volume. The key things to move forward, that will be difficult because of fiscal impact, is that the Fire Department has not grown as an organization at a rate that the community has grown and aged.

Fire Chief John Chisholm commented that one thing that is unique to Concord is that there is an inability to train on duty because of the number of companies there are. There is no ability to protect one piece from answering calls to do training. They don't have the ability to take a single company off duty to complete training without being constantly interrupted. Bigger cities (Nashua and Manchester, Concord is



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the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest city) have more pieces and an ability to shelter those doing the training and allow for completion of that training. The Concord Fire Department is at capacity with the number of calls it can handle.

There are residential units in the pipeline and if those come to fruition, the population will increase significantly, while that's a great thing for the community, in order to maintain our ability to serve, especially with an increased capacity, we need to seriously consider funding both training and staffing.

## **Discussing & Creating a Plan of Action for Examining City of Concord Social Services**

### **Applications. Verifying Impact, Measurables, & Future Plans**

Councilor and Chair Amanda Grady Sexton proposed bringing Karin Emis-Williams in from the Social Services/Welfare department and have her walk through each of the social service agencies that the City of Concord funds, and get input from her perspective on which agencies are helping, what the relationship looks like, how many people they have helped. She may be able to help guide the board on what questions they should ask each non-profit as they come before the board in the coming months. The board members will also delve into the applications on their own. This will be the first in depth look at outcomes for the residents of Concord, as suggested by the City Manager. What are each of the agencies doing to help the social service dept of Concord, once it is determined that services are needed what do the funded organization do, how responsive are they, do they help, what are the outcomes?

The impact of the proposal of the new school on the heights was discussed and neither Police or Fire identified an increased impact on public safety. The board discussed the upcoming annual reports from Police and Fire and asked that the reports include information about recruitment and retention efforts in addition to any increase demands they expect to see because of the new housing units planned for construction over the next few years. In addition, the board would like to hear about prioritized budget needs.

### **Future Agenda Planning**

1. Police and Fire Annual reports-including specifics – April
2. Presentation from Human Services Department
3. Develop a plan to reach out to the social service agencies to have them come in back to back at upcoming meetings



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## **Adjournment**

Drew Biemer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Kretovic seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:25pm.