



Public Safety Board

Minutes

April 24, 2017

3:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

Members present: Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton (Chair), Mr. Anthony Bourque, Mr. Don Carter, Mr. Michael Russell, Ms. Carol Hargrove (arrived 3:20), Ms. Lisa Brown

Others Present: Mayor James P. Bouley

City Staff Present: Police Chief Brad Osgood, Fire Chief Dan Andrus (Staff Liaison), Deputy Fire Chief Sean Toomey

Not Present: Councilor Rob Werner, Mr. Jim O'Neill, Councilor Fred Keach, Councilor Stephen Shurtleff, Councilor Brent Todd, Mr. Stephen Edwards

Call to Order

Councilor Grady Sexton called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of October 17, 2016. Mayor Bouley asked that the minutes clarify that his comments during that meeting were made in response to a question. Councilor Grady Sexton moved to amend the minutes to reflect that. Mr. Carter seconded that motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mr. Carter moved to approve the minutes as amended. Mr. Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Annual Report of the Public Safety Board

Chief Osgood presented the Police Department report. He commented on the shift from heroin and fentanyl to methamphetamine. There were 15 deaths from drug use in Concord last year. Burglaries and auto theft, which are often related to drug use, are up. Trespassing cases are down, likely due to a decrease in homelessness. He also

commented on the staffing shortage faced by the Department. There are currently seven police officer vacancies and four are out on long term injury. He also reported on the status of recruitment efforts. He was surprised to see the high failure rate on the entry level written examination as well as the physical portion of the test. The ongoing economic recovery has produced some attractive employment opportunities for college graduates. It is a very competitive job market and Concord is not alone. Police Departments across the State are experiencing the same results. That said the Department is getting the job done.

Ms. Brown asked how this is affecting the overtime budget. Chief Osgood replied that the overtime budget was completely spent last year. Mr. Carter asked about recruiting efforts. Chief Osgood talked about job fairs at colleges, websites and word of mouth. Mayor Bouley commented that two teachers had asked him about drug use, with older students introducing younger students to drugs. Chief Osgood commented that Concord has had gangs, groups, and cliques for many years. They come and go and take on various shapes and sizes but he would not label them as a "gang." These do not rise to the level of gangs such as The Brotherhood of the White Warrior. Mr. Bourque asked the Mayor if there was any link to drugs. The Mayor replied that it had been a very short conversation. In response to a question about the relocation of the women's prison. Chief Osgood said that there could be some impact on social services, but it is too soon to predict what impact it will have on crime. It is likely that families of inmates will move to Concord. Mr. Russell asked about bike patrols. Chief Osgood said that they should be back out shortly. The problem oriented policing unit will likely be active from June through September.

Mayor Bouley asked about the use of community service aides. Chief Osgood said that they deliver paperwork and handle a variety of administrative calls for service. The challenge is to find the right people to do the job. Chief Osgood commented on the great relationship between the police and the community. He strongly encourages that if you see something, say something by calling the police. Mr. Russell asked if the report should say something about supporting community services aides. Mayor Bouley said that the City Council looks at this report in formulating the budget. Last year, they added more officers in the budget, but it has not been possible to fill all of those positions. Chief Osgood commented that community service aides could handle 20 calls for service daily. Mr. Russell commented that the Department had two of these at one time. Ms. Brown asked if the officers out on disability could do some of this work. Chief Osgood replied that two of the four officers are on light duty. Mr. Russell moved to recommend to the City Council that they support the reinstatement of the community service aide program. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bourque. The motion passed 5-1, with Ms. Brown dissenting.

Chief Osgood stated that the City Council, Public Safety Board, and City Administration have all been very supportive of the Department. They are doing all that they can to quell the drug problem. They participate in Operation Granite Hammer. This has produced 40

arrests. The police officers are doing a fantastic job. Ms. Hargrove asked if it cost a lot of money to go to the police academy. Chief Osgood stated that it is a 16 week program, with no tuition. The costs are salary and benefits for the new recruits. Students have to be sponsored by the department. They could do an employment contract, but large agencies typically do not use them.

Mr. Bourque moved to approve the Police Department report. Mr. Carter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chief Andrus presented the Fire Department report. He said that he would not go over the written report in any detail, but wanted to point out that, while calls had increased only 2.5% in the last year, that they had increased significantly over the last three years, for a total increase of 1,041 calls since 2013. Calls for emergency medical services increased by 718, likely due to the aging population.

He thanked the City Council and the City Administration for their support of the Department reorganization. He described specific changes and said that expectation had been exceeded on the benefits of the move. It was a cost neutral reorganization, with significant savings likely in the coming fiscal year. He said that there had been a facilitated discussion with the union executive boards seven weeks ago today and that it had taken over five hours and gone very well.

Chief Andrus said that opiate overdoses seemed to have levelled off in 2016, but had experienced a resurgence in the first quarter of 2017.

Chief Andrus commended the two local unions representing Concord's fire officers and firefighters for their community service work, including Operation Crash at NHTI, Operation Warm for providing coats to children in need, and to the Department's two administrative specialists for getting crews out to bring popsicles to the children at City pools during the summer.

Chief Andrus said that his major recommendation was the addition of an ambulance company to the Central Fire Station. Increased call volumes have resulted in a situation where all of the City's ambulances are busy for an average of seven every ten days. A less visible impact occurs when ambulances are called into other districts in the City when the district ambulance is out, lengthening response time. Chief Andrus also spoke about a facility location study which is in the capital improvement program for next year. Concord's stations range in age from 36 to 50 years and it is important to determine if they should be relocated or if continued investment at the current locations is warranted. Chief Andrus also spoke of the position of Fire Alarm and Traffic Technician, vacant since a layoff in 2009, as an important succession tool for the Fire Alarm and Traffic Superintendent, with his oversight of the fire alarms system, traffic management, and the fiber optic network.

A question was asked about the cost. Chief Andrus said that first year costs were approximately \$842,000 and included a new vehicle. The cost after that is about \$600,000 annually. Mr. Carter asked if there would be any costs to redistricting if the ambulance is added. Chief Andrus said that response districts would remain the same and reprogramming could be handled by existing staff. Mayor Bouley asked about the distribution of calls between day and night, and if there could be some alternatives for staffing. Chief Andrus said that 2/3 of calls occur between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., with the other third occurring in the next twelve hours. He also said that they would look at different alternatives. Mr. Bourque asked about the impact on revenue. Chief Andrus said that this move would not significantly increase revenue, as all but a few calls were being handled by Concord units. He said that revenue had been increasing at an average rate of 5.8% annually over the last eight years and over 8% annually over the last three years. Mr. Bourque asked if the revenue from ambulance services was paying for the program and Chief Andrus said yes. Chief Andrus also said that the fee schedule for the next fiscal year had been revised to include some increases and additional revenue was anticipated from that. He talked about the benefits of a fourth ambulance to everyone in the City.

Mayor Bouley asked about the impact of Langley Parkway. Chief Andrus said that this issue had been discussed at a meeting with the City Manager last week. The City Engineer has shown that this would decrease travel times to the hospital with ambulances coming from Concord and the communities to the east. Mayor Bouley did say that he wanted to be clear this his company represented Concord Hospital and that, while he himself did not, he wanted to make that known. A question was asked about back ups in the Emergency Department. This is a problem, particularly with the number of calls related to mental health emergencies. Chief Andrus said that calls for mental health emergencies were down in the first quarter, perhaps due to mobile services from Riverbend.

It was duly moved and seconded to approve the Fire Department report. Mr. Carter said that, due to a potential conflict of interest with his employment and with the recommendation for facilities studies, he would abstain from voting on that part of the report. The motion to approve the report was approved, with one abstention and no negative votes.

Ms. Hargrove asked Chief Osgood about panhandling. Chief Osgood said that there has been an increase and the Department continues to work on that problem.

Mayor Bouley stated that homelessness has a huge impact on public safety in the City. The two years of having a cold weather shelter at the old St. Peter's Church have ended, with no option of using that or other facilities in the future. He said that the Concord Coalition to End Homelessness is planning to build a shelter at their facility on North Main Street. He said that it should have 25 beds and has been approved by the Zoning Board. He asked for board members' support as this moves forward.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be scheduled at the call of the Chair.

Adjournment

Mr. Bourque moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Carter seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.