

Public Safety Board

Draft Minutes

May 6, 2013

3:00 p.m.

City Council Chambers

Members present: Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton (Chair), Councilor Fred Keach, Mr. Anthony Bourque, Mr. Jim Cotsana, Mr. Jim O'Neill, Mr. Michael Russell, Mr. Steve Edwards

City Staff Present: Mr. James Kennedy (City Solicitor), Chief John Duval (Police Department), Chief Dan Andrus (Fire Department)

Guests: Mr. Peter Silvestro (Eagle Square Deli), Mr. Ray Boucher (Britches of Concord)

Excused: Councilor Stephen Shurtleff

Absent: Councilor Richard Patten, Councilor Jennifer Kretovic

Call to Order

Councilor Grady Sexton called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. Board members, guests, and City staff introduced themselves.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Mr. O'Neill moved to approve the minutes of December 17, 2012. Councilor Keach seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Referral from Downtown Merchants

Mr. Boucher testified that he had seen an increase in loitering and begging for money and of activities that prevented people from coming in to stores. He said that there had been numerous events in Eagle Square, including vandalism and drinking. He reported that a group of business owners met with the Mayor, City Councilors, the City Manager, and the Police Chief and that "It has been terrific ever since."

Mr. Boucher testified that Chief Duval and the Police Department have done a great job. They have provided bike patrols and other measures. He said that it is great that Concord is improving facilities.

Mr. O'Neill asked if the people involved in the activities were local. Chief Duval said that it was a mixture of local residents and out of town people. Mr. Cotsana asked for more information Mr. Cotsana asked for additional details on the meeting and aftermath. Chief Duval said that the meeting lead to a proactive approach using existing laws and ordinances to make contacts and, in some cases, arrests. The focus was on behaviors and keeping lines of communication open.

Mr. O'Neill asked if the activity was related to weather, if there was more activity when the weather was nicer. Chief Duval said that it was. Mr. O'Neill asked if minors were involved. Chief Duval said that there were some minors involved in the activity. Mr. Bourque asked if the Chief needed more resources. Chief Duval reviewed some staffing and deployment facts and said that he wants to put on officer on foot patrol full time in the downtown area. Councilor Grady Sexton asked Chief Duval for more information on his strategy. Chief Duval said that the strategy is about concentrating efforts in the downtown area.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked if there was anything from the Legal Department. Mr. Kennedy said that the laws and ordinances are in place to address the concerns raised by the merchants. Councilor Grady Sexton asked if we have all the tools needed to address this. Mr. Kennedy said that loitering is not illegal, but that other behaviors associated with the activity are illegal, such as trespassing and obstructing customers from gaining access to businesses. Councilor Grady Sexton said that we have the tools and the Police Department is addressing the problem. Mr. O'Neill stated that the Council needs to be cognizant of the fact that the property downtown is the highest value in the City and intimidating people will result in a ghost town.

Councilor Keach made a motion to report that the board is satisfied that the issue has been addressed and that it will report back to the City Council as needed. Mr. Bourque seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Annual Report of the Public Safety Board

Chief Duval said that the full report is in the packets. He reviewed the statistics for Part I and Part II crimes and stated that 2,698 individuals had been arrested. He said that some new programs had been put on line focusing on domestic violence as well as reducing crime through prevention and education. Officer Christy Spaulding has been assigned follow up work for complaints of domestic violence. Chief Duval spoke of the sex offender tracking program and that ten registered offenders were randomly contacted each week. The compliance rate is over 90 percent among the approximately 220 registered sex offenders in the city.

Chief Duval spoke about the new crisis intervention team and stated that mental health issues were on the rise. Education includes the effects of medication and strategies for deescalating aggressive behavior. Mr. O'Neill asked where the resources for the program came from. Chief Duval said that these were municipal funds. Chief Duval said that

traffic enforcement was a priority and spoke about the Merrimack County DUI task force. He said the Police Department is also preparing for the implementation of a police motorcycle unit. Accident reduction on major corridors is another focus area for the Police Department, as is addressing neighborhood traffic issues.

Chief Duval reported that there are eight vacancies for police officers and that he is conducting aggressive recruitment. There has been some difficulty in finding qualified candidates. He also said that there are some areas of vulnerability for the department with non sworn staff. He talked about staffing issues in the records and dispatch areas. He does not see a need for additional police officers. Mr. O'Neill asked if a bachelor's degree was required. Chief Duval said that a 4 year degree is preferred, however there are exceptions including a 2 year degree, prior police experience and military service. Mr. Costsana asked about the starting salary. Chief Duval said that it is in the upper \$30,000 range and is competitive with other departments. Mr. Costsana talked about Perley Street and some conditions that he has noted on that street.

Chief Andrus presented the Fire Department report and reviewed call statistics. He said that it is important to look not only at the numbers, but at the wide range of calls to which the department responds. He reviewed the Department's accomplishments in 2012. Heart safety was a major focus, with the acquisition of LUCAS devices for all three of the City's ambulances, new protocols on therapeutic hypothermia for cardiac arrest patients, and being named a Heart Safe Community. The state offered training funded by grants and Concord Fire employees were able to participate in over 4,000 person-hours of training in hazard materials, technical rescue, incident command, and other topics. Chief Andrus talked about some of the major incidents of the year, including the fire at the Endicott Hotel in February. He said that it was one of the coldest and most difficult fire fighting operations he had ever seen and that it was a remarkable achievement to have saved the structure. The Concord Area Trust for Community Housing awarded the Concord Fire Department the Housing Hero of the Year award for 2013 for saving this structure, and for preserving the housing stock in the community. Chief Andrus also talked about the other major fires that occurred in the community. He also spoke of the coordination efforts between City departments during Hurricane Sandy in October. The Police, Fire, and General Services Departments responded quickly to reports of power lines and trees down and the impact on the community was minimized.

Chief Andrus talked about the need to consider critical department needs as the economy begins to rebound. He talked about the final section of the report and the need to restore Engine One, an assistant fire marshal, and the fire alarm and traffic technician. All of these positions had been eliminated in past budget cycles and they continue to have an impact on service delivery. There are also critical needs in training that could be addressed with an additional full time employee.

Councilor Grady asked about fire fighters and cancer and what was being done to address that. Chief Andrus said that the Portsmouth Fire Department has put together a program after one of their members died of cancer. They have been delivering it to departments throughout the state. About half of the Concord Fire employees have seen the program.

Chief Andrus said that it has been very effective, as it is fire fighters talking to fire fighters about cancer. Chief Andrus said that one area is keeping turnout gear clean. For many years, it was considered a source of pride to have turnout gear that had been through several fires without being washed. We now recognize that the smoke and other combustion byproducts cause cancer.

Chief Andrus recounted a story about a man who came to his office on the morning of the School Street fire in April. The man introduced himself as the father of an 18 year old woman who had been injured in an auto accident a few weeks earlier. The Concord crew that responded insisted that she go to the hospital and transported her. She was subsequently found to have a life threatening medical condition for which she was successfully treated. She will graduate from high school in a few weeks. The man told Chief Andrus he had to come in person to express his thanks, as a letter would not do. Chief Andrus said that it is important to know that there are stories behind the numbers and the stories are compelling.

Mr. Bourque moved to accept the reports as written. Mr. Cotsana seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will occur at the call of the Chair.

Adjournment

Councilor Keach moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was duly seconded by Mr. Bourque and passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:58 p.m.