

## **Public Safety Board**

### **Draft Minutes**

**April 7, 2014**

**3:00 p.m.**

### **City Council Chambers**

Members present: Councilor Amanda Grady Sexton (Chair), Mr. Michael Russell, Councilor J. Allen Bennett, Councilor Fred Keach, Ms. Lisa Brown, Mr. Anthony Bourque, Mr. Jim Cotsana, Mr. Don Carter, Mr. Steve Edwards, Ms. Carol Hargrove

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

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

Note: Councilor Werner was not notified of this meeting due to an error of the part of the staff liaison.

### **Call to Order**

Councilor Grady Sexton called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. Board members and City staff introduced themselves.

### **Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The board reviewed the minutes of October 7, 2013. Mr. Bourque asked for a correction on page 4. Councilor Keach moved to approve the minutes of October 7, 2013 as amended. Mr. Cotsana seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Annual Report of the Public Safety Board**

Acting Police Chief Brad Osgood introduced himself and highlighted some areas of the report. An average of 242 people are arrested each month. Of this number, 44 are juveniles. A total of 590 criminal offenses are reported each month; 15% are felonies. There were six traffic fatalities in FY12. There has been one in the current fiscal year. There were 3,300 traffic citations. Bike patrol is very robust. Vacancies include a Chief's position and three police officers.

Acting Chief Osgood said that there are ongoing issues with drug problems. Seven people have died from drug related causes. He has submitted a report on panhandling. There have been 26 calls and seven arrests in the month of March 2014 related to the new

City ordinance. The cold weather shelter for homeless persons is now closed, which creates the potential for additional problems.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked if the ordinance was helpful. Chief Osgood described the behavior of locking up intersections by pressing the “Walk” button. The ordinance has addressed the safety problem of people going into the roadway to solicit. Councilor Grady Sexton asked about business concerns. Chief Osgood said that the downtown car patrols the area of most concern. Councilor Grady Sexton asked about the presence of sex offenders and the viewing of inappropriate material in the library. Chief Osgood said that patrol staff and other Police employees check the library frequently. Councilor Grady Sexton asked if it is difficult to curb behavior and if there is anything that this board can assist with. Chief Osgood said that the library is very responsive to the issue, but sometimes it is difficult to enforce as the subjects have left.

Councilor Keach asked how many Police employees are eligible to retire. Chief Osgood said that number is 8 to 12. Councilor Keach asked if a stronger economy is having any effect. Chief Osgood said that law enforcement is a “niche job” and that people rarely leave for other jobs. Mr. Edwards asked about the mix of City residents versus non City residents among the homeless and what segment of the population has drug use issues. Chief Osgood said that residency determination is difficult and that drug users are in all ages, from 16 to their 50’s. There are no stereotypes. He described a meeting that the Police Department convened two weeks ago where the comment was made “We will not arrest ourselves out of this situation.” Enforcement is not the answer. Waiting times for treatment are extensive. Overprescribing medication is a problem. Heroin in particular is an extremely addictive substance.

Mr. Carter asked about vacancies in the Police Department. Chief Osgood said there are three police officer vacancies and that the detective unit is buried with felony cases and needs another investigator. Mr. Carter asked how long it takes to hire. Chief Osgood said that the best case scenario is two months from application to hire. He recommended aggressively pursuing getting to full staffing and retention. Three people graduate from the academy this Friday. Mr. Carter asked if there is a need above the level of 84. Chief Osgood said that he would support another sworn officer. He wants to increase the community resources unit. Another officer is needed to investigate drug offenses.

Mr. Cotsana asked if there is a penalty for viewing inappropriate material on library computers. Chief Osgood said that it depends on the type of material. If it involves children, yes. If it involves adults, no.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked about an incident involving US Marshals. Councilor Bennett commented on alcohol use and people locking themselves in the men’s room. Chief Osgood said the problem has been addressed by requiring the use of a key, but evidence of drug use still exists. Councilor Keach said that the library sees the viewing

of pornography as a First Amendment issue. This is a policy decision. It should not be accessible to being seen by children. Councilor Grady Sexton agreed.

Councilor Grady Sexton asked about the construction of a women's prison in Concord. Chief Osgood said that a meeting is planned on the women's prison. He said there is some problem with large amounts of granite from the original prison construction being buried at the site of the proposed construction.

Chief Andrus reviewed the report for the Fire Department. He noted the decrease in calls, although structure fires increased substantially. He spoke of the collaboration with the Visiting Nurses Association to have the Fire Department identify elderly patients who have fallen in their homes and offer them VNA resources. The program has been in place for three years and there has been a drop in the number of calls. Chief Andrus noted that he has been compiling statistics for the budget narrative and that fire calls are trending down and EMS calls are trending up.

Mr. Edwards asked about good intent calls. What are these. Chief Andrus said that this occurs when something is mistaken for a hazardous condition, such as steam coming from a building being mistaken for smoke. The Fire Department does not mind being called if there is a question about a hazard. We would rather respond to something that turns out not to be a problem, rather than not respond to a real problem.

Chief Andrus reviewed the list of 2013 accomplishments. The Insurance Services Office rating was upgraded, placing the City in the top 1.2% of thousands of communities surveyed. This is not all about the Fire Department. The water supply accounts for a large share of the rating and received a nearly perfect score. All front line firefighters completed the intensive fireground survival course. This is important, especially after the recent tragic events in Boston. The new tower truck went into service last April and is an excellent vehicle that has been used several times. It was designed by a team of employees from Fire and from Equipment Services to be the best value. A new Engine 4 has been ordered and will be delivered this spring. Hillsborough was added to the dispatch center, bringing to 22 the total number of communities served by this center. Chief Andrus invited all board members to tour the facility.

Chief Andrus turned to his recommendations. The highest priority is the restoration of Engine 1 to service. There can be delays in getting an engine to a structure fire. Those delays are most acutely felt in Penacook where it can take well over ten minutes to get units on scene if Manor Station units are out. A Boscawen engine was the first to arrive on the scene of a house fire on Washington Street last October. This is a major gap in the City's protection.

Mr. Carter asked what an acceptable response time is. Chief Andrus said the goal is that 80% of emergency responses be made in under five minutes. We are currently at about 66% of responses in that time frame. Response time is important. A few weeks ago, a

partition fire was reported in a house on Blackwater Road. Due to the distance, response time was about 12 minutes. Crews found significant fire when they arrived. In March of 2009, a fire victim crawled onto the roof of a home on Rumford Street and was perched there when fire crews arrived and had to be rescued by ladder.

Mr. Carter asked about the impact to response time if Engine 1 were to be put back in service. Chief Andrus said that, since there is another unit at Central Station that handles the calls that would have gone to Engine 1, the impact on response time is minimal. Most of the calls are for medical emergencies. The real concern is the potential for structure fires. There are about 1,400 calls in the Central Station district each year. The plan would be to keep one of the fire engines when a new Engine 5 is purchased. It would also be necessary to add four people and overtime. The annual cost would be in excess of \$900,000.

Councilor Bennett said that there was a large increase in retirement costs last year as a result of the state “downshifting” their costs to local governments. This was \$12. To \$1.3 million. It was a significant increase and resulted in a tax increase. The bond rating has been upgraded, but insurance costs have also increased. The Fire Department has a \$12 million budget, \$11 million of which is attributable to wages and benefits. This is an expensive item to consider and he does not see it happening in the next 2-3 years.

Chief Andrus discussed the letter from President Hebert of the Concord Fire Officers Association. Chief Andrus expressed his appreciation for the manner in which significant downsizing was handled in 2009. No one was laid off. An employee whose position was eliminated was able to be relocated to another division. The City did a good job in handling a serious crisis. It did create a gap in services.

Mr. Bourque asked about the number of calls per year to the state prison. Will this double with the new women’s prison? Chief Andrus said that adding the new prison will certainly have an impact. Mr. Bourque asked if this is being negotiated. Chief Andrus said that the state pays the City \$125,000 annually for Fire Department services. That number has been the same for many years. A substantial amount of property in the City is tax exempt, although some of those entities do contribute payments in lieu of taxes, such as St. Paul’s School.

Deputy Chief Toomey reported that the Fire Department responded to 115 calls to the prison in 2013 and has responded to 27 calls so far this year. Increases are anticipated.

Ms. Brown asked about the request for Engine 1. Chief Andrus said that this is to staff an engine company at Central Fire Station. The Department currently has five engines, three front line and two in reserve. The request is asking for staffing for an additional engine. Councilor Keach asked if this includes everything. Chief Andrus said yes, this included the cost of new employees including benefits as well as additional overtime to maintain a minimum staffing level.

Councilor Bennett spoke on continuing financial crises across the country. We are all struggling.

Councilor Grady Sexton spoke of the delays to care in getting into the prison.

Chief Andrus reviewed his other recommendations. These include an additional person to in the EMS and Professional Standards Bureau. This would be added to the current position. One position would focus on training and another on EMS. The Fire Department is seeing an increase in inspection workload and permit fees and he recommends the restoration of an assistant fire marshal position that was cut several years ago. A fire alarm technician position was also cut in 2009, leaving the supervisor to work alone. This position is responsible for the City fire alarm system, the fiber optic network, and all traffic control devices.

Chief Andrus also talked about a recommendation to increase minimum staffing to add a fourth person to the ladder company. This recommendation emerged from a comprehensive review of safety standards. The current staffing with three persons means that the crew must often be split to perform different tasks and this means that someone is working alone, often in a dangerous environment. This should not be competing as a priority with Engine 1, but should be addressed as funds become available.

Chief Andrus reviewed a spreadsheet on special events costs. This is not all inclusive, but includes the major events in the City and the costs to event organizers. We will continue to work with General Services, Fire, and Police to streamline the process to encourage events, which are important for the community. Mr. Carter asked if all costs were recovered. Chief Andrus said yes.

Ms. Hargrove moved to accept the reports. Councilor Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held at the call of the chair.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 p.m.