

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT – AUGUST 9, 2021

Members: Reinhold, Chairman; Richard, Vice Chairman; Ressler, Member; Barr, Alternate; Petrick, Staff

Attendees: Reinhold, Chairman; Richard, Vice Chairman; Ressler, Member; Barr, Alternate; Council Members: Rowe; Martin; Zimmerman; Dudley; Mayor Mowen; Staff: Chief Petrick; Manager Thompson; EM Randy Gockley; Guests: Chief Richard Gehman; Jim Kiefer; James Gehman; Matt Showalter; Teresa Caruthers; Rebecca Beres

The Public Safety Committee met on July 19, 2021, and discussed the following:

Action Items: None.

Discussion Items:

- 1. Police Department Monthly Report:** Chief John Petrick provided an overview of the June monthly report. He reviewed the two drone team deployments. One deployment was assisting New Holland Police with locating a fleeing suspect. The suspect was located using the drone's thermal imaging camera. He also detailed the "Excellence in Policing" efforts of the department. Specifically discussing how officers successfully communicated during several incidents with individuals who were deaf and/or mute. Chief Petrick notified Council that three electric patrol bikes have arrived, officers have been trained in their use and are now being deployed. The use of the electric bikes will increase an officer's patrol "footprint" exponentially. A bike officer also recently attended a Mainspring event. Electric bike use will also reduce officer fatigue. Chairman Reinhold appreciated our drone use capabilities. Councilman Ressler inquired about the status of the body worn cameras. Chief Petrick responded that the Borough Solicitor is currently reviewing the purchase agreement and the purchase would be made shortly after the agreement is finalized. Councilman Ressler inquired about the body worn camera costs. Chief Petrick responded that WellSpan Ephrata Hospital graciously provided funding for the cameras and PCCD grant provided the additional funding for the project.
- 2. Police Quarterly Report:** Provided in the packet.
- 3. Emergency Management Report:** Randy Gockley provided an overview of the Emergency Management monthly report. He stated that the recent July 3rd Firecracker Race went well and there were no medical transports. The July 4th Fireworks Event was uneventful related to emergencies. He mentioned that the recent decontamination drill at Ephrata WellSpan went well with first responders, police and fire personnel participating. As of Friday, Ephrata WellSpan had no hospitalized COVID-19 patients. Also, the mall vaccination clinic was closing; however, COVID-19 vaccines are still available via healthcare providers. He stated that Borough Staff is reviewing the Emergency Operation Plans for the upcoming Ephrata Fair.
- 4. Alarm Ordinance Chapter 115:** Borough Manager Thompson provided an overview of the current ordinance and discussion item related to having two categories of false alarms; one for fire and the other non-fire related false alarms. Solicitor McManus received some input from Staff and Council on the ordinance changes. Solicitor McManus stated that Council sets policy regarding how to allocate the fees from false alarms. Councilmen Richard and Ressler both agreed with having the two categories previously discussed and Councilman Barr had no issues with it.

5. **Unavoidable Patrol Vacancies:** Chief John Petrick informed Council that 2021 was an unusual year for patrol staffing and overtime due to the following: officers in quarantine for COVID-19, line of duty injuries, and other medical leaves. We will continue to monitor the financial impacts of the overtime to fill staffing voids and refer to Budget and Finance Committee if necessary. Councilman Ressler asked about mid-year finance report. Chief John Petrick responded that the mid-year report would be issued and discussed at the upcoming Budget and Finance Committee meeting.
6. **Public Safety Siren Activation:** Councilman Wes Dudley inquired about his desire to better understand the usefulness and process of the siren activation. He understood the reasoning behind the siren activation and wanted to know if there were other means to alert personnel. He inquired about its possible use in a weather emergency such as a tornado.

Chairman Reinhold stated that the siren activation issue has been a discussion item before. He inquired as to how the siren is actually activated. Lincoln Fire Chief Richard Gehman provided an overview of the activation process. Chief Richard Gehman informed Council that County 911 activate the sirens remotely which is similar to a paging system. When fire services are called out by County 911, the siren is automatically activated.

Mayor Mowen commented that to his knowledge, all area fire departments utilize such a siren system. He also stated that the siren is not activated between the hours of 11 PM to 6 AM.

Chairman Reinhold inquired about use of the siren for a tornado warning. Randy Gockley responded that the average tornado warning notice is approximately 6-9 minutes and it would not be possible to manually activate the siren in that time. Mr. Gockley mentioned that individuals need to take some personal responsibility for emergency planning, such as weather alert radios or cell phone weather warning alerts. Also, one could subscribe to media outlet weather alerts.

Council members Mr. Richard and Mr. Barr recommended no changes to the siren activation procedure.

Councilman Ressler inquired about the status of the siren along Queen Street (rail trail). Mr. Jim Kiefer responded that when the siren stopped working, it was never repaired.

Teresa Caruthers commented about the community organizing during disasters with people checking in on the welfare of others during these times. She also asked if safety messages could be placed in the utility bills. Manager Thompson stated that “bill stuffers” were an option as well as printed messages on the bill itself.

Councilman Dudley inquired as to who makes the decision about the times that the siren can be activated.

Lincoln Fire Chief Richard Gehman stated that the siren is a digital paging system that is on a timer system. He also added that Lincoln Fire Company only has the siren activated during 8 AM to 9 PM as a courtesy to neighbors. He also mentioned that he has received comments from volunteers that work in the agricultural community that while they operate machinery, they can still discern the siren activation, whereas they might not hear the pager.

Mayor Mowen stated that there are outdoor activities when it might not be practical to have a pager on and, therefore, the siren is helpful. The siren also notifies the public that the fire companies are very active.

James Gehman of Lincoln Fire Company stated that there have been times when the voice pager did not work and therefore the siren was very helpful.

Rebecca Beres asked if Pioneer Fire Company could consider adjusting the siren activation times to match that of Lincoln Fire Company. Mr. Jim Kiefer stated that he would look into this.

7. **Sergeant Promotional Process:** Chief John Petrick provided an update on the promotional process. He informed Council that on May 10, 2021, Borough Council approved the Resolution Amending Civil Service Commission Rules and Regulations for the proceedings of the Police Civil Service Commission Relating to Certain Testing and Examination Requirements. He informed them that the two Sergeant position vacancies will be filled using the previously mentioned process is well underway. He stated that the Ephrata Borough Civil Service Commission is overseeing the process that was previously approved by Council. He stated that the Written Examination portion of the promotional process took place on June 30, 2021 and was prepared and administered by Harrisburg Area Community College. He stated that the Structured Interview portion of the process will take place on August 3 followed by the Selection Committee interview and a recommendation to the Public Safety Committee and finally to Borough Council for final approval. He previously reported on the promotional process to the Public Safety Committee at the June 21, 2021, meeting. No concerns were voiced by Council members present.
8. **Unemployment Fraud:** Chief Petrick informed Council of unemployment frauds that are being reported to our agency. He suggested the individuals visit social media sites for helpful tips to protect themselves from fraud.

Old Business Items: None.

Miscellaneous Items: None

Meeting was adjourned by Chairman Reinhold at 7:27 PM.