

## **PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT – SEPTEMBER 13, 2021**

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

**Attendees:** Reinhold, Chairman; Richard, Vice Chairman; Ressler, Member; Barr, Alternate; Council Members: President Rowe; Martin; Zimmerman; Dudley; Mayor Mowen; Adamstown Mayor Schmidt; Staff: Petrick; Thompson; McManus; R. Gockley; Attendees: Chief M. Kiefer; Rebecca Beres; Teresa Caruthers

The Public Safety Committee met on August 16, 2021, and discussed the following:

### **Action Items:**

1. **Sergeant Promotion:** Chief Petrick informed the Committee that the Promotion Selection Committee recommended that Officer Daniel Albaugh and Detective Kenneth Lockhart be promoted to the rank of Sergeant effective October 11, 2021. Both will be subject to a one-year probationary period beginning October 11, 2021 and ending October 11, 2022. Public Safety Committee unanimously approved the promotion and will forward to Borough Council for vote.

### **Discussion Items:**

1. **Monthly Police Report:** Chief Petrick reviewed the July Patrol Police Report. He highlighted the Excellence in Policing portion of the report. In one incident, officers (Det. Quinn and Off. Cook) arrested an individual for an active arrest warrant and discovered that the person was due to receive medication for an ongoing condition. Prior to completing the warrant service, officers made arrangements for the person in custody to receive the needed medication. Chief Petrick also provided information on an incident that involved Officer Newswanger related to an Automatic License Plate Reader “hit” on a suspended registration plate. It was also determined that the owner of the vehicle was wanted on a robbery warrant. As Officer Newswanger approached the vehicle, it fled with the two occupants. The fleeing vehicle was later located abandoned. The occupants were later located and arrested on drug-related offenses. A third incident was mentioned by Chief Petrick relating to Officer Orwig. Officer Orwig conducted an extensive investigation related to vandalism at Chapel Gate Park (West Cocalico Township). Several juveniles will be issued citations related to the criminal mischief.

Chief Petrick mentioned there has been numerous identity theft issues related to unemployment fraud. He provided the website [IdentityTheft.gov](http://IdentityTheft.gov) as a resource to protect oneself from identity theft. Chief Petrick mentioned that officers will be visible in and around the schools once the school year commences.

Chief Petrick reviewed the Support Services Group Report and discussed the drone team activity which included assisting Ephrata Borough staff with a water leak issue as well as assisting Manheim Borough Police with a missing subject.

Chief Petrick mentioned that a patrol bike presentation was held last week at WellSpan-Ephrata Community Hospital to thank the hospital for their generous donation of the three new electric patrol bikes.

Chairman Reinhold inquired about the Part I and II case assignment and clearance figures on the report. Chief Petrick explained that a crime might not be cleared in the same month but possibly

in a following month. The total clearance for all crimes would be reflected in the end of the year report.

Chairman Reinhold expressed concern for Officer Newswanger's safety related to the excellence in policing incident previously discussed in the meeting. The concern was safety for one officer stopping a vehicle at 2:30 AM with a dangerous felony. Chief Petrick expressed police tactics/training as well as additional units are utilized during traffic stops for officer safety purposes.

Mr. Richard asked that a notation be added to the report when outside agencies assist Ephrata Police. This is in reference to seeing in the report how often our agency assists other police departments. Mr. Richard is all for us assisting other agencies. Chief Petrick stated that we are only one incident away from needing the assistance of other police agencies.

Mr. Ressler commented about the self-checkout retail thefts and how it could be difficult to identify suspects due to video quality. Mr. Ressler also inquired about civic issues related to a tenant issue in the report and if it was an ongoing issue. Chief Petrick explained that police attempt to resolve problem property calls so return is limited.

Chief Petrick followed up on the retail theft videos and the importance of the public providing tips on the identity of suspects. This allows police to follow up and make arrests.

Mr. Barr commented on the terrific job the department is doing.

Adamstown Mayor Schmidt had no comments for the Public Safety Committee.

Chairman Reinhold asked the public for comment. Teresa Caruthers commented that there are several local stores that sell kratom. She stated that employees of these stores told her that they do not sell kratom to anyone under 21 years of age. She stated that the federal government calls it a drug of concern but does not regulate it. She asked about local regulation. She stated that it is habit forming. Rebecca Beres commented that kratom acts like a natural opioid. Ms. Caruthers stated that it is sold in huge bags and capsules and by the time it is processed and arrives in the United States, the concentration is much higher. It comes from Thailand. She was concerned that it is available here. Ms. Beres stated that some use it as an energy booster or testosterone booster, as a natural enhancer of things. Ms. Caruthers stated that large doses can be sedating.

Chairman Reinhold stated at this point it is not illegal; which, Ms. Caruthers replied it is a drug of concern and it is up to states to regulate. Ms. Beres mentioned that this is something to keep an eye on since increase number of places that sell it and children in area and concerned of the next opioid crisis.

Chief Petrick commented that concerned individuals could contact state legislators to pass legislation so that it could be enforced. Chairman Reinhold inquired about this with Solicitor McManus about banning this locally before the State passes legislation. Solicitor McManus mentioned it would need to be pre-empted by State law. Chairman Reinhold recommended that Ms. Caruthers contact Mr. Zimmerman's office regarding this matter and that people can discourage the use of this item by word of mouth.

Mr. Tim Barr asked if this Committee or Council could send a letter to State Representatives to look into this and legislate. Chairman Reinhold commented that anyone could send letters individually.

- 2. Emergency Management Report:** Randy Gockley reported on last week's severe heat wave in the Borough and that proactive measures of setting up a cooling center at the Rec Center took place. He wanted to thank Jim Summers of the Rec Center and Ephrata Area Social Services for snacks, water and bus for transport. The information went out via social media. As of Friday morning, he was not aware of anyone using the center. He also checked with the County Office of Aging regarding senior center use and extending hours to cool. The director of the office informed Randy Gockley that very few people took advantage of the center's hours. Mr. Gockley stated that there does not appear to be a critical need for the cooling stations for future use but will continue to monitor.

Mr. Gockley provided COVID-19 statistics for the area. The three local hospitals (Lancaster County) had 36 COVID patients. He reported that Kim Stonebraker informed him that WellSpan-Ephrata Hospital had 7 COVID patients. Mr. Gockley reported even though there is an uptick in COVID cases, it is not critical at this time. He also stated that WellSpan's pharmacy has COVID vaccines available Monday-Saturday.

Mr. Ressler commented that he is impressed with both the Ephrata Emergency Management and Ephrata Police Facebook pages, and they are very informative.

Pioneer Fire Chief Mike Kiefer provided an update on the construction of the new aerial ladder. Information should be received next week on the start date of the construction. He stated that the loaner apparatus was involved in the recent crash and is being repaired. It might be repaired and returned by Fair Week. He updated the Committee on last week's fire on Washington Avenue in which a firefighter received minor injuries. On Saturday, the fire company went to the area of the fire and distributed approximately 16 smoke detectors to area residents. This was proactive follow-up.

Mayor Mowen inquired about the number of fire calls already this month. Chief Kiefer stated that the information would be in the monthly report. He did state that starting last week, the fire company has been responding to 3-5 calls per day consistently if not every day, but every other day. There has been a significant uptick in the calls this last week. Mayor Mowen stated that he wanted to add to Chief Kiefer's comments that he tracks the fire police call volume (fire police do not respond to every fire company call) and of this morning, the fire police had answered 25 calls so far this month. Chairman Reinhold asked Mayor Mowen what would be a monthly average from his experience. Mayor Mowen responded that his figures would be a total monthly call volume. Randy Gockley commented on Pioneer and Lincoln Companies responding to numerous false alarms and one commercial business in Stevens Fire Company area (first due) in particular has been an issue. It is located in Ephrata Township. He stated that this is a facility that needs to get a handle on regarding false alarms due to the high number. Chairman Reinhold inquired if we could enforce the false alarms in Ephrata Township. Chief Petrick responded that Ephrata Township would need to pass a similar alarm ordinance as the Borough's. Manager

Thompson commented that Ephrata Township would be encouraged to consider such a similar ordinance. Randy Gockley stated that the location in question is 621 Stevens Road.

Mayor Mowen stated that a definition of false alarm needs to be worked on for the ordinance. Chief Kiefer commented on a fire manual to assist with it and he could provide such information.

Chairman Reinhold stated that the ladder truck that was recently involved in the accident is being repaired by insurance and that the new truck's construction has not started; therefore, are we behind in the new truck timeline since construction has not started? Chief Kiefer provided an overview on the production/construction timeline. The delay issues are related to being unable to obtain supplies for the truck construction and well as COVID-related issues. He hopes to have more answers on August 23 from the vendor. Chief Kiefer stated that they are currently operating a true loaner truck while repairs are being completed on the accident-related apparatus. The insurance carrier provides coverage on a loaner truck for three months. Hopefully by the time the 3-month period is over, the accident-related truck should be back from repairs. If not, the fire company would rent the truck that the insurance company is providing. Mr. Richard asked Chief Kiefer if the resale value of the accident-related truck would go down due to the accident. Chief Kiefer responded that the resale would not be affected. He also stated that Facebook has been helpful in advertising the sale of fire apparatus. Mr. Ressler stated that the loaner truck is getting a workout due to the recent call volume and was pleased that we got the loaner. Mr. Wes Dudley expressed his appreciation for fire staff coming to Washington Avenue after the fire and meeting the residents.

Chairman Reinhold adjourned Public Safety Committee meeting at 7:20 PM.