

**PUBLIC SAFETY STANDING COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING
WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2022, 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

A. Meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Carol Blanks.

B. Attendees: Councilor Carol Blanks, Chair; Councilor Alberto Cortes; Councilor Adrienne Billings-Smith; Rick Ledwith, Director of Human Resources; Police Chief Vernon Riddick; Asst. Police Chief Lawrence Terra; Asst. Police Chief Robert Riccobon; Fire Chief Greg Priest; Asst. Fire Chief Hugh O'Callaghan; Fire Marshal Robert Grimaldi; Deputy Director of Emergency Management Robert McCue; Officer Joe Hopkins, PD.

C. Opening Remarks: Chair Blanks took a moment of silence to remember the lives lost in the Russia-Ukraine War.

2. Business Items

A. Approval of Meeting Minutes of March 3, 2022: The Minutes were approved.

3. Communications

Chair Blanks reported there were no communications.

4. Staff Reports

A. Fire Department: Chief Priest stated a Cancer Bill was passed in the House. The Lilley Road fire was a significant fire but an accidental cause with no injuries. He highlighted the Post-Incident Neighborhood Outreach (PINO) Program where they are in the neighborhood connecting with folks about community risk reduction and providing smoke detectors. Having a fire in one's neighborhood is very stressful and they reassure folks and allow them opportunity to speak with Fire personnel to make sure they are safe and feel comfortable. Channel 61, West Hill Automotive and Elmwood Automotive provided cars for a recent extrication demonstration as well as to supplement their rescue training. The Department of Public Works assisted in placing the cars. At that ceremony, they promoted two members, Captain Brian Antigiovani and Lieutenant Phillips. His report has been submitted in writing.

B. Police Department: Chief Riddick reported on April 1 there was an incident on 56 Fairlawn which an individual was firing a weapon outside his house. The ESU team and responding patrol officers safely effected an arrest with no injuries and Mr. John Cassidy was arrested for a plethora of charges. A great amount of discretion was exercised to get him into custody without

any officers firing a firearm. On April 6, there was a suicidal individual at Oakwood overpass. The individual was scaled over the fence and teetering over the highway. Officer Shimo talked the person down and did a good job. That person was not injured. A couple nights ago on Robin Road there was a situation with an individual who threatened to shoot police officers who responded on scene. The ESU team was deployed. There was good cooperation with patrol officers to set up a perimeter. The person came out without incident. Two weapons were recovered thought to be firearms but one was a .22 caliber pellet gun and the other a type of double-barrel rifle that shot out arrows 2 to 3 feet long with prongs on the end and is used to hunt bear and/or deer. It is a deadly weapon. A minimal amount of force was utilized. It was a deadly force situation that was avoided and no one was injured.

The Detective Division is working with DOC regarding a previous investigation. The individual had been previously arrested and was making phone calls out of the jail trying to harass and intimidate one of the witnesses that statements had been taken from. There was good cooperation and collaboration with the State's Attorney's Office and DOC. An arrest warrant was secured and the judge put a \$500K bond on the individual. The CSU, an arrest warrant is forthcoming. A suspect has been identified for several catalytic convertor thefts that occurred within the town. On a motor vehicle stop about 1-1/2 weeks ago, 231 illegal fentanyl pills were recovered and the operator of the vehicle was arrested for illegal possession and sale of narcotics. Last Saturday was the DEA drug takeback day and 305 pounds of prescription pills were taken in. The Auto Theft Taskforce is a regional taskforce with Hartford, West Hartford, Simsbury and Farmington. Police departments are being bridged and working together. It was established in October and going through April they recovered 189 stolen vehicles, 76 stolen vehicle arrests, 17 firearms recovered, 74 arrest warrants and 32 classified as other arrests. Distracted Driving grant from April 1 through April 30, 286 motor vehicle stops were conducted. Of those, 100 infractions for cell phone violations and 84 warnings. Also, 13 infractions were issued for texting while driving and gave out 2 warnings, 1 DUI, 1 summons for a suspended licensed, 11 for speeding and 49 warnings for speeding.

Supernumerary Update: Year to date through April, we have pulled in \$188K for the town. The supernumerary program was put in with cooperation with the Town and the union and are retirees working these jobs. If our retirees did not work these jobs, this revenue would have been lost to the Town. Crime town-wide, statewide and nationwide, the data collection for April is not finished but through March, overall Part 1 crime is down 33.9 percent. The Action Plan has been submitted. He highlighted increasing minority hiring to better reflect demographics is an ongoing situation. For cultural competency DEI training, Dr. Lorenzo Boyd was brought in. He is a nationally recognized expert in his field and a professor at UNH. He provided training for the entire police department. The response to the training was overwhelming positive. The partnership with Social Services, Social Worker Samantha Inniss for April had 24 referrals and the partnership is working out well. They are working on the encampment by Kane Street and she has been instrumental getting that dismantled and finding locations and help for those individuals. A presentation was provided the latter part of 2021 regarding the HANOC area and the program they wanted to initiate with students and youth in that area. It was well received.

Officer Hopkins and others put up a good PowerPoint presentation. Officer Hopkins is here this evening to talk about the program, some of the outcomes and corrective action that could be taken as well as provide information what is planned going forward.

Officer Hopkins stated he went through a year-long program with Dr. Boyd on cultural training and in speaking to fellow officers, it was overwhelming positive. Back when he and Officers Sanford and Kisela spoke, a program was put together through Dr. Boyd's program they sat in on called the Connecticut Institute of Youth and Police Relations. They partnered with the HANOC program. They completed a 6-week pilot program, which was overwhelmingly positive. There were up to 20 students ranging from grade 3 to 8. Community Relations Officer Santora was added as part of the partnership. Numerous topics were discussed ranging from social media, substance abuse, bullying, peer pressure and finished out the program with what we can do for our community, which was cleaning up the HANOC area to make it a safer environment. Different specialized divisions were pulled to give presentations to the students, which they loved. Canine officers did a demonstration, which the kids loved. A couple members of the ESU team came with the armored vehicle and did a group demonstration. The kids saw the inside and took pictures. The Animal Control Officer came in and had some interesting dialogue, which was positive at the end. Some of the drone pilots showed some drones. It was a great experience. The kids enjoyed it.

With COVID, the program was shortened at the start. Several local businesses in town donated food to the students to help the parents and guardians once some of the restrictions were lifted. These businesses are willing to participate in the future. It is planned to speak with Ms. Oslander, who ran the HANOC program, and their representatives on ways to make everything better. It is planned to reboot the program and make it better. They are in contact with reports from CIYPR, who are helping guide through the process. They are bridging the gap and showing they are there as a resource and providing resources. They were given a drawstring bag and told to bring it every day because they wanted to keep filling the bag with souvenirs for them to take home. They never had students not come back. Parents came out for the demonstrations. The program is with many other municipalities and the goal is to help the students network with other students from other cities and towns. They are still in contact with partners from Hartford and East Hartford. They run their programs differently but they have resources we maybe do not. They are working with HANOC to build this into something sustainable for the future.

Councilor Cortes asked Chief Riddick if we are looking ahead with the ATV issue that was starting to become a problem last year. According to social media, they are getting vehicles in already and planning to do parades. There is the ordinance where certain people can be fined but he questioned if there were upcoming plans to help curb it or a taskforce statewide.

Chief Riddick stated that is an objective of the Greater Hartford Auto Theft Task Force. The task force is seen out there but behind the scenes is the intelligence gathering – where are the meet and greets, who is participating and what can we do to seize them before they get some place or corral them if they are safely at a location. There is also the drone program and part of the vision

going forward is to utilize that for intelligence gathering and to not get involved with a pursuit. Hartford also has several drones.

Chair Blanks asked Chief Riddick how the vehicle stops are planned when looking at rolling that out.

Chief Riddick stated the grant helps with the financial component and going to high-frequency areas. Tactically a drone can be used and other times officers are in plain clothes walking up and down the street as an observer and then calls out the vehicle and the operators description and then a marked unit pulls them over.

Chair Blanks asked how the cameras that collect speed data, which tell when one is going above the speed limit to slow down, are monitored, especially in community neighborhoods.

Chief Riddick stated it collects data to warn people and gives Police information as to the speeds and time of day, which helps with traffic enforcement details and deployments later on.

Chair Blanks stated Officer Hopkins has already answered her question if parents or guardians attended.

Officer Hopkins stated the kids come themselves willingly and their parents after the first week started to stay for demonstrations and were taking videos. After the demonstrations were over parents left and were back as soon as it was time to go. At the start of the program, it was planned to invite parents to take part in the event of the last day, which they want to bring back. Due to COVID, they were not allowed to have food for the kids because it was not prepackaged and they thought they would have a couple hours with them but had only 1 to 1-1/2 hours. The idea is to be with them longer and have the parents present as a final thing to show what they are doing with the kids and if the parents have questions or anything they want addressed. They are open to ideas. They want to work with them to figure out where we can improve and make it better.

Chair Blanks asked as they engage with the youth and have open dialogue what types of questions are they asking.

Officer Hopkins stated because they are younger, it is a little different. They were there to listen and the kids were excited to tell them what they enjoyed doing and what they do in school. There were some kids a little skeptical talking to them and on the quieter side but at the same time they were engaged in the conversation. When they reached out and tried to promote conversation, they were in tune. It was not they were minding their own business and they always came back. Because they were a younger group, a lot of the questions were farfetched, like asking if the Canine Unit goes out and bites people. They explained what they did. With Animal Control, some of the kids said they did not like Animal Control if they put animals down and they explained they do it to help the animals and at the end, the kids understood and liked Animal

Control again. In having those conversations, they gained a better understanding of the roles and any preconceived notions were answered. It was a positive experience.

C. House Bill 5417 Update: Mr. Ledwith stated the bill passed overwhelming at the House and put through to the Senate. He will find out if it is in front of the governor for signature with the overall budget. This bill makes adjustments to the existing juvenile justice laws. The law works with the judicial branch to speed up juvenile arraignments, requires GPS for repeat offenders, and provides flexibility with the current 6-hour hold at a community corrections center if the arresting officer is in the process of seeking a detention center. It provides additional funding to the judicial branch to provide more education programs and if they are on probation get them involved in afterschool sports, on-the-job training. He will report if anything comes out of the governor's signature with any changes.

Councilor Cortes stated the bill goes back to the resolution and what do we do as a town. The catalytic converter went through the Senate so it is difficult to sell them back to places. Bill 5417 is a step in the right direction. It could be more on 2 ends. It touches the accountability piece but also the funding for education. When one looks at the dollars, it is not a lot and he asked how accessible is that to the community. We do not want all the work the PD is doing going to waste. We are making arrests and dealing with the issues as they come but it is up to the State. He asked if we craft something and be proactive as far as a resolution or do we support this while there is legislation in place **and do resolution** and continue supporting our PD and highlight some of these things.

Mr. Ledwith stated that through Chair Blanks we will file the **Council's** _____ in terms of legislation or resolution to pursue.

Chair Blanks agreed and said there could be further discussion. She asked if there is a piece in the bill about parental or guardian responsibility.

Chief Riddick stated he sits on the legislative committee for CPCA and there are numerous discussions of different options. It came up to a level but was quickly quashed. He does not see that happening. There is an element of **fairness to the responsibility** with some of the kids. He forgot to mention he and Chief Priest in their respective departments pre-COVID planned a joint public safety day with FD and PD and plan on revisiting that now that restrictions have been lifted. We will see how the numbers go and pulling it off this summer free of charge to the community with hot dogs, hamburgers and ice cream. The FD and PD unions will be funding it.

5. Future Agenda Items

No future agenda items were identified.

6. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

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