

**Public Safety Committee
Thursday, April 18, 2024
Remote via Zoom
Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES**

Members Present: Melo Grant (Chair), Mark Barlow, Carter Neubieser

Staff Present: Hayley McClenahan (Assistant City Attorney), Michael LaChance (Fire Chief), Jon Murad (Police Chief), Shannon Trammell (BPD Executive Manager), Lacey Smith (CAIP Assistant Director)

Public Present: Jordan Silberman

Meeting called to order at 6:02 PM by Councilor Grant.

**1. Adopt the Agenda
1.01 Adopt the Agenda**

Motion to Adopt Agenda as written.

*Motion by Councilor Neubieser, Seconded by Councilor Barlow
Final Resolution: Motion Passes
Yes: Unanimous*

**2. Adopt Minutes
2.01 Motion to Adopt Minutes from March 21, 2024**

Motion to table Minutes from March 21, 2024 until the next Public Safety Committee meeting to allow members time to review.

*Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Neubieser
Final Resolution: Motion Passes
Yes: Unanimous*

**3. Public Forum
3.01 Verbal Comments**

No public comment.

Public forum closed at 6:06 PM.

**4. Chiefs' Reports
4.01 Chief LaChance's April Fire Commission Report**

Councilor Barlow asked for clarification on vetted locations for Fire Station 1, referring to mention in the report of a potential relocation to Gateway Block as part of development. Chief LaChance responded the City has considered several locations since the idea was first studied in 2018, including the old bus station on Pine Street, the old DPW site, and a small site between BED and DPW. Chief LaChance advised that in collaboration with CEDO and Planning, the study needs to be updated for location based on call volume, as calls have increased from the the time of the first initial study and moving Fire Station 1 further away from the downtown could prove to be a poor decision in the interest of public safety.

Councilor Neubieser inquired about the ratio of applicants to vacancies within the Department and if conversations for how to extend funding for CRT were taking place with the new administration. Chief LaChance replied that the pool of applicants is trending downward, despite that qualifications have not changed or increased in difficulty, and that this trend is reflective of a larger trend of fewer individuals seeking out this kind of work. In regard to CRT, Chief LaChance advised that conversations are taking place with the union for hiring and that while not many discussions have occurred with the Mayor's Office yet, the City is in budget season and stated his recommendation would be to continue using the same approach to staff CRT until they have a year's worth of data to analyze the program's efficacy.

Councilor Grant expressed interest in having Battalion Chief McCombie attend a future meeting to talk more about her EMS Buprenorphine initiative, adding that going forward, a different individual could represent BFD and BPD each time, rather than both chiefs needing to attend every meeting, which would also provide new opportunities to educate the public on different programs and initiatives. Chief LaChance expressed support for the idea and thought BC McCombie would most likely be able to attend the next meeting and added that CAIP and other outreach partners have also been involved in this initiative and that other cities are considering following Burlington's example with the CRT program.

Councilor Grant requested the Committee be involved when the staffing study is brought to the Administration for review. Chief LaChance informed the Committee that the company which conducted the staffing study would be presenting at a future City Council meeting, and that he expected to be meeting soon with the union executive board and the Mayor to discuss the results.

4.02 BFD Response Data as of 3/14/2024

The Committee had no questions regarding the BFD Response Data.

4.03 Chief Murad's March Police Commission Report

Councilor Grant mentioned the BPD released an updated Priority Response Plan today and that it would be part of the next Committee or City Council meeting.

Councilor Barlow asked Chief Murad to elaborate on the Department's challenges with recruitment and retention. Chief Murad said the challenges in recruitment and retention are due to not hitting enrollment targets for the February 2024 class and more departures than anticipated, despite that 2023 was one of the best hiring years for the agency. Chief Murad described some of the reasons for departure such as retirement and misaligned expectations of

what the job entails and how the agency operates. Councilor Barlow inquired about potential changes to the onboarding process to better set expectations. Chief Murad said Vermont's rules are unique, particularly Rule 3, and it is difficult for someone, even experienced police officers from out of state, to understand how those rules impact their everyday work until they are on the job, which is why officer hires out of the CSO and CSL programs have been more successful because those officers were already familiar with Vermont, the city, and the culture of the Department. Councilor Barlow said he would familiarize himself with Rule 3. Councilor Grant asked if it would be possible to obtain a copy of the interview questions BPD uses as well as for Chief Murad to regularly share data on the number of officers being lost and why. Chief Murad offered to invite BPD's Recruitment Officer and Recruitment Coordinator to speak to the Committee on their process for recruiting and hiring applicants and also stated it is not uncommon to lose recruits through the recruitment and training process but that other cities like New York have a significant backlog of other candidates who can step in to fill those gaps.

Councilor Grant also asked if it would be possible to add data on how often CSOs and CSLs are involved in incidents to the monthly reports, as City Data Analyst Zoe Portlas was able to pull this data upon request. Chief Murad responded that City Data Analyst Portlas provides him with that data, he will incorporate it into his reports going forward.

Councilor Neubieser asked Chief Murad to elaborate on CSO and CSL recruitment in terms of how it may help in hiring more police officers. Chief Murad explained that CAIP has an allotted number of CSL and CSO positions, with the CSL positions full and four CSO vacancies. There is also an open Community Support Supervisor position with 15 applicants being reviewed. Chief Murad shared that at least two CSOs have expressed interest in policing, one of which is actively working toward making that transition with the support of the Department. Chief Murad said that the requirements for a CSO or CSL are less stringent than requirements for police officers, so the roles can attract different kinds of candidates, and that hiring efforts have been relatively successful for CAIP. Councilor Neubieser asked if CSO and CSL data could be included in each monthly report, to which Chief Murad acknowledged that was an oversight because it is normally included and will be going forward.

Councilor Grant asked for more detail on the slide displaying incident levels, to better explain increases in incident volume and also mentioned individuals still have complaints with the online incident reporting system. Councilor Grant asked Chief Murad what the Department's plans are for the downtown this summer and if strategies like partnering with the Vermont State Police to be a presence, similar to last summer, would be employed. Chief Murad said that the program with the Vermont State Police has since ended and would most likely not come back because it cost the City a significant amount of money but acknowledged it did help, as the State troopers never made arrests and were a visual presence only. Chief Murad also spoke to delays in response with online incident reporting and the Priority Response Plan, emphasizing that if someone makes a report for an incident that is not in progress, their response may be delayed due to availability and that many other cities in the US have had to resort to similar models due to limited capacity. Councilor Grant and Chief Murad further discussed what data would be helpful to track for online incident reporting and strategies to ensure that members of the public feel their incidents are being prioritized appropriately. Chief Murad also noted that BPD is limited in its ability to rely on other agencies for assistance due to an MOU signed in 2021, between BPD and

other municipalities, stating no municipality will step in and take calls unless there is a Burlington police officer on scene as the primary. Chief Murad said the reason for this MOU was because other municipalities had concerns about being held liable for normal policing actions outside of their municipality, which had not been a major concern prior to 2020 because the need for additional support and resources was so infrequent. Councilor Grant advised Chief Murad to forward a copy of the MOU to the City Council members and ensure Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak is aware of it as well.

Councilor Barlow wondered about ways in which BPD could be more responsive to victims so individuals feel like crimes are being recognized and asked about how CJC Victim Services Specialists are being utilized. CAIP Assistant Director Smith clarified CAIP works closely with CJC's Victim Services Specialists by going through Valcour incidents weekly and refers identified victims of crime to them, so victims receive follow-up at that point. Councilor Neubieser emphasized Councilor Barlow's statements about responsiveness to victims and expressed gratitude for the organization of the Eclipse and for Executive Manager Trammell's proactiveness in community engagement.

5. Discussion of Committee's Priorities and Upcoming Agendas

5.01 Third Community Forum

Councilor Grant stated the Committee's next community forum, a continuation in a series of forums that first took place in December of 2023, should focus more on hearing from individuals who work in downtown businesses, including the City, and harm reduction strategies, as the first forums featured public safety experts as speakers and education on existing public safety approaches. Councilor Grant also mentioned there should be more representation from the Fire Department, crediting Kyle Blake of BFD for inspiring the idea of these educational forums. Councilor Grant agreed to reach out to the Mayor's Office to schedule a space and speakers for the event.

5.02 Additional Data on BFD/BPD Retention and Turnover and CSO/CSL Data

Councilor Grant reiterated from discussion on Chief Murad's report the need for additional data on CSO and CSL activity, as well as general department retention and turnover, and is looking forward to involving BPD's recruitment team at future meetings.

Councilor Neubieser told Chief Murad they would schedule to meet for coffee soon and discuss strategies for data visualization and organization.

5.03 Tracking Department Training

Councilor Grant asked Executive Manager Trammell to speak to the state of tracking required trainings for officer certifications, referencing a recent audit that found issues with tracking trainings for various agencies in the state. Executive Manager Trammell stated she was unaware of this audit but provided an update on progress with the CNA recommendations, many of which relate to training, adding that BPD reports back to the State for all required trainings and offers additional trainings not required by the State and hopes to offer new programs once the FY25

budget is approved. Currently, Executive Manager Trammell is in the process of integrating a new training tracking system called LEFTA, that will help manage training documentation, provide an overall picture of where recruits and officers stand with trainings and certifications, which she hopes to have ready to roll out by April spring break. LEFTA has several modules, and BPD plans to predominantly use the modules relating to training records and Field Training Officer process. Executive Manager Trammell advised that with the implementation of this program and further progress on DD40, a significant amount of the CNA recommendations will be successfully implemented.

Executive Manager Trammell also shared that the Department is in the very early stages of exploring software solutions to improve the online incident reporting process, such as a solution to send notifications to individuals that their online reports have been received and are being processed, and continues to welcome feedback and ideas for how the Department can be more innovative to alleviate the reliance on the Priority Response Plan.

Councilor Grant and Councilor Barlow expressed interest in shadowing BPD staff and officers, and Executive Manager Trammell replied she would look into the possibility of councilors shadowing dispatchers and other personnel.

5.04 Community Engagement

As items 5.05 and 5.06 also relate to community engagement, Councilor Grant decided to discuss these topics with 5.04. Councilor Grant and Executive Manager Trammell brainstormed several community engagement ideas that are non-invasive, reflective of the Pillars of 21st Century Policing, and leverage technology and social media:

- Councilor Grant proposed that if councilors are not able to sit in on shifts with dispatchers, perhaps dispatchers could present to the public on their role and experiences.
- Councilor Grant suggested that councilors could ask constituents what their questions are to help BPD and BFD identify what content to provide the public and more effective strategies for building relationship.
- Executive Manager Trammell said BPD Community Engagement Officer Timm is working on releasing a new informational series on dispatch and that the team has also been brainstorming ideas for short, informational videos to post on social media, such as why it is important for callers to provide birthdays and other identifying information to dispatch.
- Councilor Grant asked about the status of the BPD's Instagram account, to which Executive Manager Trammell replied she was planning to reach out to Instagram soon to regain access to the account and start using it again.
- Councilor Grant suggested the recruitment video published on YouTube be sent to councilors to share and circulated at NPA meetings. Executive Manager Trammell added the recruitment team is putting together recruitment content geared toward laterals and

female laterals in other cities, intentionally targeting cities where they are more likely to find candidates who are interested in the lifestyle Burlington offers. Executive Manager Trammell also mentioned that for local recruitment, Beach and Parks patrol and the CSO program have historically been successful in attracting candidates. Councilor Grant said the Committee could help spread the word about the Beach and Parks open positions.

- Executive Manager Trammell updated the Committee that Tim Williams of the City's Human Resources Department was taking over as the Police Commission's clerk, freeing up Executive Manager Trammell to focus on her other various priorities, including community engagement. Discussions for a more permanent solution to the clerk position are underway with the Mayor's Office.
- Executive Manager Trammell recalled that in years past, Queen City Police Foundation hosted an annual community barbeque. Efforts to revive that have been difficult because of the Department's bandwidth, but Executive Manager Trammell confirmed that QCPF would be willing to support a similar event and stated she had also reached out to every ward and NPA asking how BPD can meet the neighborhoods where they are at, identifying that the best way for BPD to ensure successful community engagement interactions is through multiple small-scale events, due to current staffing and workload constraints. Councilor Grant asked for the Queen City Police Foundation's contact information and emphasized the importance of fostering more opportunities for the public to have positive interactions with the police, referencing Assistant Director Smith's recent presentation at a Ward 1 NPA meeting.

Jordan Silberman, who works in asset protection with downtown businesses, told the Committee businesses would be willing to collaborate on a community event with BPD and wanted to express gratitude for BPD's quick and appropriate response to an incident experienced by one of the businesses this year, especially as more employees and customers have expressed feeling less safe downtown. Councilor Grant advised Silberman to email the members of the Committee and they would be in touch.

5.05 Pillars of 21st Century Policing

Discussed with Item 5.04.

5.06 Community Education Around Data

Discussed with Item 5.04.

5.07 Additional Committee Priorities

Councilor Grant stated the CNA report and progress on the recommendations would be a regular item at future meetings, as the Committee did not have a chance to prioritize it last year, and added she would connect with the Police Commission for updates regarding their portion of the CNA recommendations. Councilor Grant also suggested brainstorming other speakers to present

at Committee meetings, such as City Data Analyst Portlas, who could provide a review of the OpenData portal.

Councilor Barlow mentioned wanting to involve more businesses in upcoming meetings as guests and speakers, to address their concerns with reporting incidents and other public safety-related matters.

Councilor Neubieser emphasized prioritizing the implementation of the CNA recommendations from the CNA report. Councilor Grant offered to email the most recent CNA document to City Council members.

6. Legislative Updates on Public Safety

6.01 Review and Discussion of Legislative Updates as of April 15, 2024

Councilor Grant summarized the presentation Primmer Piper Eggleston & Cramer's Government Relations team gave to the City Council at their last meeting on April 15, which included updates on legislative bills such as H.534, S.58, S.195, and S.209, concerning issues related to emergency housing, homelessness, general assistance, retail theft, drug crimes, public safety, bail and conditions of release, restorative justice, auto theft, ghost weapons, and overdose prevention centers. Councilor Grant noted the report was available to the public via Civic Clerk, which can be accessed through the City's online calendar.

7. Other Committee Business

7.01 Confirmation of Upcoming Meetings

Councilor Grant stated future meetings would be held on the third Thursday of each month in the interest of consistency. As such, the next three meetings are anticipated for May 16, June 20, and July 18.

8. Adjournment

8.01 Motion to Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned with no objection by Councilor Grant at 8:11 PM.