

**Public Safety Committee
Thursday, June 20, 2024
Remote via Zoom
Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES**

Members Present: Melo Grant (Chair), Carter Neubieser

Members Absent: Mark Barlow

Staff Present: Hayley McClenahan (Assistant City Attorney), Michael LaChance (Fire Chief), Lacey Smith (CAIP Assistant Director)

Meeting called to order at 5:35 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 Grant

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**2. Adopt Minutes
2.01 Motion to Adopt Minutes from May 16, 2024**

Motion to adopt Minutes from May 16, 2024 as written.

Motion by Councilor Neubieser, Seconded by Councilor Grant

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

The Committee provided updates on May's action items:

- Councilor Grant noted she will set up a meeting with CAIP Assistant Director Smith since the budget season is winding down.
- Councilor Neubieser advised he is meeting with DPI Director William Ward regarding the condition of the Salmon Hole Trail, and that the encampment matter raised by a constituent at the previous meeting was resolved by the property owners, as the encampment was on private land.

**3. Public Forum
3.01 Verbal Comments**

No public comment.

Public forum closed at 5:38 PM.

4. Chiefs' Reports

4.01 BPD: Police Commission Report May 2024

The Committee reviewed the Police Chief's May 2024 Police Commission Report:

- As of May 1, BPD was staffed with 65 officers, which accounting for supervisors, detectives, airport officers, special assignment, and injuries, etc., leaves 25 available for patrol.
- Assistant Director Smith noted CAIP staffing numbers have changed since the report as one CSO is now a police officer, and one CSL was promoted to Community Support Supervisor, so the department is now hiring for one CSL and expects that hiring process to be prompt, and there are currently 5 or 6 CSOs and 5 CSLs.
- Burlington CARES is still hiring for clinicians, positions which have been harder to fill than anticipated.
- Assistant Director Smith added BPD and CAIP recently investigated the challenges in hiring CSOs and found the higher turnover associated with this position is due to CSOs eventually becoming police officers.
- The latest Priority Response Plan is included with this report for the public's reference.
- BPD has seen a 6% increase in total incidents, including calls for service, which is potentially reflective of the community's hyper-vigilance.
- Overdoses are down from 2023 but are still significantly higher than 2020, 2021, and 2022.
- Larcenies and incidents of stolen vehicles have decreased to levels lower than 2022 and 2023.
- Assistant Director Smith advised the sworn officer headcount is subject to change because there have been at least two resignations in June, but a number of recruits are headed to the Police Academy this cycle as well.

Councilor Neubieser inquired about the efficacy around allocating more funds to BPD's recruitment efforts, to which Assistant Director Smith explained recruitment funds are being used to implement broader marketing strategies, such as producing more content that highlights the positive aspects of working for BPD and CAIP to attract more candidates and said the recruitment team could elaborate more on these strategies and recruitment challenges when they

present at the next meeting. Councilor Grant emphasized that a stronger social media strategy would be critical to the Department's recruitment efforts, especially as it is trying to target candidates outside of Burlington and Vermont.

Councilor Grant also noted she intends to work on how to make the Public Safety Committee meetings more visible in the community.

4.02 BFD: Fire Commission Report June 2024

Chief LaChance reviewed the June 2024 Fire Commission Report:

- BFD is experiencing a steady call volume for 2024, being only up by about 1% compared to 2023
- Compared to 2023, overdose totals and averages are down for the year.
 - For the month of May, overdose levels dropped but are expected to increase over the summer.
 - CRT is experiencing staffing challenges due to more leave and vacation time for the season, meaning CRT may only run 1-2 days a week for the summer, so Chief LaChance requested BC McCombie collaborate with Assistant Director Smith about a joint effort to fill in gaps. Wound care kits are still being distributed and are a large part of CRT's efforts.
 - About 25% of total overdose responses for 2024 have been non-transports. Chief LaChance said BC McCombie is working on developing the buprenorphine program, which should help address treatment gaps.
 - Chief LaChance noted BPD is identifying where increased drug activity is being reported and targeting more resources to those areas.
- Calls to respond to the homeless and houseless population has increased from last year, but BFD is not receiving many calls to the waterfront encampments. Chief LaChance added conversations are continuing for how to spread responsibility of care and emergency services for this population to other communities in Chittenden County.
- Chief LaChance shared that 420 calls for service in 2024 are attributable to 21 individuals and plans to present this data at the next CommStat meeting.

Regarding high utilizers of services, Councilor Grant suggested Chief LaChance also meet with Assistant Director Smith because there is probably some overlap with BPD's call rates with these individuals. Councilor Grant also mentioned she has been in touch with Scott Pavek about restructuring CommStat meetings to reintroduce a confidential component, based on feedback from Chief Murad and Chief LaChance. Assistant Director Smith said she is also working with

Scott Pavek to focus CommStat efforts more individually while protecting individuals' information and noted that progress will be slowed down since CAIP is currently without a data analyst. Councilor Neubieser suggested Assistant Director Smith follow up with the Mayor's Community Safety Advisory Group to identify non-municipal entities with relevant data and how they might change their data-sharing practices to foster more collaboration with municipal public safety entities. Chief LaChance added one of the challenges in making CommStat or other public services more individualized is due to the HIPAA rules, which exist to protect individuals' medical information but also make it difficult to address larger public safety problems and abuses of services. Councilor Neubieser said he was struck by the gap in information between City departments when going into different interactions with the same individuals, and how that puts City staff at a disadvantage or at more risk. Councilor Grant emphasized another challenge are varying levels of access to information, which means not everyone will be able to participate in discussions as fully as they want to.

Councilor Grant requested Chief LaChance forward the Standards of Cover document referenced in the Fire Commission report to the Committee. Chief LaChance explained it was developed by Deputy Chief Petit in 2017 or 2018 and provides comprehensive information on response times, locations, and resource needs, which would be a valuable resource to consult when considering relocation of fire stations. Regarding suggested new locations, Chief LaChance said some of the suggested sites are old superfund sites and while BFD has needs for upgrades in building and dispatch operations, BPD has the same needs, and thinks new locations should be vetted for BPD as well.

Councilor Grant thanked Chief LaChance and BFD for their participation in the Juneteenth Celebration on June 15. Assistant Director Smith stated BPD was absent from Juneteenth because the event organizers uninvited them, citing the YES program incident. Assistant Director Smith said the Department and civilian team that was slated to attend was disappointed for all the effort they put into organizing for it and the lost opportunity for community engagement. Assistant Director Smith attended the restorative circle between the school, the students, and BPD, and said this experience showed her how the degree of public attention this incident has received has prevented healing on all sides and that the community, inclusive of BPD because officers and civilian personnel are members of the community, needs to be willing to have difficult conversations to truly begin to heal mistrust and afford the Department more opportunities to show it is more than law enforcement, and that public safety overall, is more than law enforcement.

4.03 State's Attorney Sarah George: Monthly Backlog and Clearance Data

The Committee reviewed data from the State's Attorney's Office as of June 1 for Chittenden County:

- 2,819 total criminal cases were pending. 227 criminal cases were filed.
- About 1,200 cases are above disposition, indicating the number of cases that are backlogged.

- The clearance rates for Chittenden County were as follows, where rates over 100% indicate that more cases were closed than opened:
 - Criminal: 126%
 - Civil: 97%
 - Family: 82%
 - Probate: 130%

Councilor Grant noted Saint Albans has a webpage listing the cases their police department has filed with the State's Attorney's Office and thinks BPD should include similar data on their webpage. Councilor Grant also mentioned wanting to begin discussions around updating BPD's pages on the City website or even giving them their own website.

Councilor Grant said some updates in legislation are due to go into effect that will hopefully help prevent more cases from going above disposition. Councilor Neubieser another barrier to moving through the backlog is lack of funding from the State, and Councilor Grant added she thought that an increase in those funds was included with the State's adopted budget but that stronger leadership is needed at the State level.

Councilor Neubieser asked for clarification on where to direct residents looking for information about specific cases. Councilor Grant advised residents can get in touch with the State's Attorney's Office or Councilor Neubieser can reach out on their behalf as long as he has an incident number. If a resident does not have an incident number, then it is most likely that the case has not been filed yet and the resident or their councilor can follow up with BPD for more information.

5. Social Media Access Update

5.01 Social Media Access Update

Councilor Grant said she will follow up with BPD to get an update on where the Department stands with gaining access to its Instagram account.

Councilor Grant said she reached out to the City's Chief Innovation Officer for information on guidance for departments regarding City social media use and best practices with departments for account security.

This item will be on the next agenda.

6. Community Engagement Report

6.01 Community Engagement Report

Councilor Grant discussed her ideas for community engagement opportunities, including BPD collaborating on a recruitment video with BHS Tech students enrolled in video production classes and introducing officers via reels in a humorous and personable light, working with Community Engagement Officer Sarah Hernandez Timm to track engagement with the site and

posts and other content. Getting the recruitment video out on various platforms to increase views.

This item will regularly occur on the agenda.

7. Review of Previous Recruitment Suggestions and Status

7.01 Review of Previous Recruitment Suggestions and Status

Councilor Grant discussed the need for accountability, for the City and the public given the City's budget issues, in how recruitment funds are spent in the next fiscal year and ensuring they are driving a return on investment, funding more than retention and sign-on bonuses.

8. Retention Problem

8.01 Retention Problem

Councilor Grant is looking into how exit interviews are conducted and confirming if HR is involved in that, and finding out and tracking why people are leaving.

This item will be on the next agenda.

9. Preview of July Presentations

9.01 BPD Recruitment Team Presentation – Anhad Bajwa (Recruitment Coordinator) and Corporal Carolynne Erwin

BPD's recruitment team has been confirmed for presenting to the Public Safety Committee at their July meeting.

9.02 BFD Presentation on New Harm Reduction Plan with EMS Battalion Chief Marsha McCombie and Special Guests

BC McCombie was confirmed to present on a new harm reduction plan, involving offering medically assisted treatment to individuals who choose not to be transported, at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.

9.03 Traffic Enforcement with Officer Mellis

BPD's Officer Mellis will be presenting to the Committee on traffic enforcement and available to answer the public's questions at the next Public Safety Committee meeting.

10. Upcoming Meeting Dates

10.01 Upcoming Meeting Dates

The Committee's next meeting dates are scheduled for July 18, August 15, and September 19.

The meeting on July 18 will be in-person with a remote option.

Councilor Grant requested clarity on the legislative change to open meeting laws and the requirements for the Committee to host hybrid meetings. Attorney McClenahan stated the Public Safety Committee is free to continue in a remote fashion until further confirmation and guidance is issued by the City Attorney's Office, as the Public Safety Committee acts in a strictly advisory capacity, where the new hybrid requirement seems to only apply to committee bodies with authority to make final determinations.

11. Adjournment

11.01 Motion to Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned with no objection by Councilor Grant at 7:22 PM.