

**Public Safety Committee
Thursday, October 24, 2024
Remote via Zoom
Burlington, Vermont
DRAFT MINUTES**

Members Present: Melo Grant (Chair), Mark Barlow

Staff Present: Hayley McClenahan (Assistant City Attorney), Michael Curtin (BFD Battalion Chief), Shannon Trammell (BPD Executive Manager), Dwayne Mellis (BPD Sergeant)

Public Present: Todd DeLuca

Meeting called to order at 5:34 PM by Councilor Grant.

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

Motion to Adopt Agenda as amended to remove Item 2.01 and revisit at a future meeting.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Grant

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**2. Adopt Minutes
2.01 Motion to Adopt Draft Minutes from September 19, 2024**

This item was removed from the agenda.

2.02 Motion to Adopt Draft Trespass Appeal Hearing Minutes from September 19, 2024

Motion to adopt the minutes from the Trespass Appeal Hearing on September 19, 2024.

Motion by Councilor Barlow, Seconded by Councilor Grant

Final Resolution: Motion Passes

Yes: Unanimous

**3. Public Forum
3.01 Verbal Comments**

Todd DeLuca of Ward 4 shared a recent troubling encounter he had with a member who appeared to be of the houseless community, and described feeling under serious threat of physical violence and said issues of public safety are getting worse.

Public forum closed at 5:41 PM.

4. Burlington Fire Department Update

4.01 Commission Report Review

Battalion Chief Curtin shared personnel updates with the Committee:

- BC Jamie Valyou retired and is now the Fire Chief of Charlotte, VT.
- Captain Mark McDonough was promoted to Battalion Chief.
- Kevin Alexander and Jason Cherest were promoted to Lieutenants.
- The next Lieutenants testing cycle will be in November, and the next Captains testing cycle in February 2025.
- Four newly graduated recruits started work on October 14.

BC Curtin overviewed updated commission report data:

- Call volume has risen to 9,156 since the last Commission report.
- New engines 1 and 3 have been received and are expected to be ready for next week.
- Three members of the Department were deployed to North Carolina to help with Hurricane Helene rescue and recovery efforts for roughly 20 days.

4.02 Incident Type Breakdown

BC Curtin provided a graph to the Committee demonstrating the different categories by which calls can be coded as they come in through dispatch.

Councilor Grant asked if overdoses would fall under the EMS category, which BC Curtin confirmed.

Councilor Barlow inquired about a further breakdown of what constitutes Good Intent calls. BC Curtin clarified Good Intent calls are typically any case where a concerned citizen calls in a perceived emergency that is proven to not be an emergency when BFD arrives on scene.

4.03 Recruitment Update with Social Media Data

BC Curtin said the Department continues to focus social media efforts toward lateral transfers and is strategically boosting posts. Councilor Grant shared Chief LaChance is expected to give a presentation on BFD's lateral transfer recruitment strategy at the next City Council meeting.

Councilor Grant plans to ask BFD to provide social media engagement updates on a monthly basis.

BC Curtin said that after the first couple of weeks of posting, there have already been 13 applications for the lateral transfer, yet only three met the minimum requirements to move on in the process. BFD would like to see higher numbers and plans to continue promoting and recruiting.

Councilor Barlow asked what platforms the Department is using. BC Curtin said the data included with the meeting is for Facebook and Instagram, and that recruitment advertisements are also on the City website and Front Porch Forum.

4.04 Wellness

Given the increase in incidents BFD is responding to, the Committee asked BFD to share how the Fire Department is managing employee wellness. BC Curtin said there are several programs to address wellness, including the Peer Support Team, which gives support to employees who respond to highly distressing incidents.

4.04 Burlington Community Connection Program

BC Curtin reviewed BFD's Burlington Community Connect:

- A secure website where residents and business owners can log in and input information to expedite and optimize first responders' emergency response. BC Curtin emphasized only those responding to your emergency will see your information.
- Residents and business owners enter any information they believe to be relevant for emergency responders regarding their household or property, such as the number of people in a household or business at any given time, pets, family members with mobility issues, where kids' rooms are located, codes to security locks on doors, etc.

Councilor Grant inquired how renters and landlords should enter information. BC Curtin said renters should enter information as Residents, and the information needs to be updated when the properties turn over.

Councilor Grant urged the public to review the Fire Chief's latest report attached to the agenda of today's meeting for more information on BFD activities.

Councilor Grant asked BC Curtin for an update on the PREVENT initiative, which was presented to the Committee on July 18 by BC McCombie. BC Curtin said the Department just finished its first wave of training for the program, and is waiting on the State to give the greenlight to roll out, which is expected to be a two-week process.

5. Burlington Police Department Update

5.01 Conversation with Executive Manager Shannon Trammell including data requests, community engagement, and recruitment

Executive Manager Trammell reviewed her current responsibilities in BPD, covering several roles due to staffing issues:

- As Executive Manager, Trammell acts as liaison between the Council, council bodies, and the Department, manages Department projects, and is responsible for the implementation of the CNA recommendations.
- Executive Manager Trammell is also still carrying out her old role of Executive Assistant, which has been retitled to Command Assistant. A new Command Assistant is anticipated to start early November.
- This was Executive Manager Trammell's first year involved with the budget, and the Department is hiring for the Business Manager position that BPD plans to retitle as Budget Manager to take over that function instead.
- The position of Senior IT Administrator is also open so Executive Manager Trammell, Deputy Chief Labarge, and the current Help Desk Technician are all working to cover that position.
- Executive Manager Trammell has also been working closely with the City's facilities team to push forward any repairs and maintenance the building needs, which are extensive.

Executive Manager Trammell offered updates on facilities:

- Repairs from the arson incident are wrapping up.
- The lobby phone, which was recently broken, has been replaced.
- Contracts with Facilities have been signed for the exterior canopy of the lobby entrance, which will address a structural issue with the pillars. An exterior phone has been incorporated into the design to help mitigate issues in the vestibule.

Executive Manager Trammell overviewed personnel updates:

- The Department has had several departures for the fall due to retirements and other opportunities, creating new openings for professional and sworn positions, including Deputy Chief of Operations, which is being advertised in major police publications for more visibility.
- A new CSO, CSL, and Emergency Communications Specialist are coming onboard in the next few weeks.
- Two officers are at the academy and expected to start in field training in the coming weeks.
- A Clinician and Clinical Supervisor have been hired for the CARES team. Executive Manager Trammell and CAIP Assistant Director Smith met with NAMI to bring more trainings to the Department. The Clinical Supervisor is also working to put together a working group to build the curriculum for these trainings relying on local partners.

- A new data analyst from the Planning Department will be working with BPD.

Executive Manager Trammell provided updates on online reporting, community engagement, and social media:

- Citizens can now send citizen complaints directly to complaints@bpdvt.org until the Department is able to develop a long-term solution for the forms no longer supported on the new City website. Complaints can also still be dropped off in person at various City locations, and CSLs can assist with navigating the complaint process.
- A fillable form for Drug Tips has been added to BPD's site so citizens can resume submitting drug tips.
- The Department expects to have a new online reporting implemented by the end of November, a solution which is expected to resolve the backlog issues as online reports will be automatically entered into Valcour rather than officers needing to manually input the online reporting information.
- BPD and PIO Timm are working with NPAs to start a dialogue of how the community wants to engage with the Department to meet the community where they are at. PIO Timm has also been with REIB to collaborate on community engagement initiatives.
- PIO Timm is newly managing the Department's Instagram page and is generating and seeking ideas for creating content.

Councilor Grant asked for councilors to get more advanced notice for swearing-in ceremonies of new officers. Executive Manager Trammell confirmed that the Council and the Commission would be receiving earlier notice of these events going forward.

Councilor Grant expressed concern for business owners with the current priority response plan going into the holiday season. Councilor Barlow agreed and wants the priority response plan to be reevaluated to give more attention to Church Street Marketplace.

Councilor Grant said she would like to do a deep dive on incident volume and selected Valcour incidents.

Councilor Grant asked if a member of the drug unit could present to the Public Safety Committee at a future meeting.

Councilor Grant discussed with Executive Manager Trammell ways that BPD could bolster their social media strategy in partnership with the council and provide more training to staff on social media use, especially for recruitment.

5.02 Commission Report Review

The Committee reviewed Chief Murad's latest commission report during the discussion with Executive Manager Trammell.

5.03 Traffic Enforcement with Sergeant Mellis (Time Certain 6-6:15 PM)

Sergeant Mellis discussed his work in traffic enforcement and the Safer Highway Accident Reduction Program (SHARP) in Burlington:

- Using overtime, Sergeant Mellis targets areas of the city where he has witnessed repeated traffic violations and will patrol one area until he sees the behavior reduced before moving onto another area.
- Sergeant Mellis recently attended an NPA meeting and used free time to visit areas specifically mentioned by residents at that meeting.
- The amount of hours Sergeant Mellis can dedicate per month fluctuates dependent on personal and professional bandwidth.
- Sergeant Mellis has patrolled areas such as Riverside Ave, the Downtown Core, and the South End and Shelburne Road.
- Sergeant Mellis said not every traffic stop results in a ticket, and the focus is on education around traffic safety.

Councilor Grant asked about the feasibility to set up cameras for automatic ticketing in the city. Sergeant Mellis said the issue with that solution is the cameras would only capture the plate of the vehicle, ticketing the owner of the registered vehicle rather than who is operating the vehicle. Executive Manager Trammell added a few other officers help Sergeant Mellis on the SHARP detail and the officers' focus is on education and changing behavior, which Executive Manager Trammell thinks could not be accomplished entirely with cameras.

Councilor Grant asked if car accidents have increased in Burlington. Sergeant Mellis believed that was true. Executive Manager Trammell volunteered to follow up with data on that.

Sergeant Mellis has been with BPD for nearly 16 years and lives outside Burlington. Sergeant Mellis commented that he hopes to see an increase in BPD's ability to do more traffic enforcement because it is an important function of safety for more than just mitigating risky driving behavior but deterring other crime as well because the police are more visible to the public.

Councilor Barlow asked how Sergeant Mellis learns of problematic areas. Sergeant Mellis said residents will send emails, discuss traffic problems on Reddit, or he will prioritize areas where he personally witnessed violations on other shifts.

Councilor Barlow asked if Sergeant Mellis will also stop traffic for ignoring stop signs and rolling stops. Sergeant Mellis confirmed that when he is on these details, he will stop someone for violating any traffic law.

Executive Manager Trammell said future requests and complaints from councilors' constituents can be forwarded to her to pass along to the SHARP detail. Councilor Grant mentioned Police Commissioner Comerford had a complaint that would warrant follow-up from the last Police Commission meeting regarding traffic issues.

5.04 Recruitment – Use of Digital Advertising

Executive Manager Trammell gave a few social media updates:

Councilor Grant mentioned how job posts are not being pushed from the City's job site to the bigger job sites, which means that job posts for BPD and other departments are not getting the attention they could be.

Councilor Grant proposed meeting with Executive Manager Trammell and PIO Timm to coordinate a digital advertising plan and communication strategies.

6. State's Attorney Data

6.01 State's Attorney's Data Review

Councilor Grant reminded the public the State's Attorney's Data of the case backlog and clearance rates is available to view with this meeting's materials on CivicClerk.

7. VCR – Violations of Conditions of Release

7.01 Violations of Conditions of Release Discussion

Councilor Grant clarified that when someone violates their conditions of release, that individual ends up back in court with a new case for the violation.

The Committee reviewed a research brief attached to the meeting materials overviewing Vermont's violations of conditions of release data from the last few years.

Councilor Grant has invited the presenter of the report, Robin Joy the Director of Research of the Crime Research Group, to present to the Committee and is expected to join the November meeting.

8. Adjournment

8.01 Motion to Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned with no objection by Councilor Grant at 8:03 PM.