

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
June 29, 2020
Online Broadcast Meeting

Present: Councilmembers Neff, Bullock, Litten

Also Present: Councilmembers Kepple, Rader, & Shachner, Mayor George, Acting Police Chief Wilkins, Police Chief Malley, Police Captain Gary Sprague, Police Captain Stone, Police Lieutenant Warner, Police Investigator Pat Fiorelli, Fire Chief Dunphy, members of the public, & Clerk Bach taking minutes

Start time: 7:00 p.m.

AGENDA

Approval of the minutes of the June 8, 2020 Public Safety Committee.

Chairperson Neff made a motion, seconded Councilmember Litten to approve the minutes of the June 8th Committee meeting.

A roll call vote was taken as follows:

Yeas – Bullock, Litten, Neff

Nays – None

Motion passed. The minutes were approved.

Communication from Councilmembers Kepple, Rader, & Bullock regarding policing policy review & racial equity. (Referred to PS 6/15/20)

Communication from Mayor George & Chief Malley regarding Lakewood Police Department. (Referred to PS 6/15/20/)

Chairperson Neff summarized each of the communications, with the first being focused on Campaign Zero, which is comprised of 8 data based strategies to reduce police involved killings. Mayor George's and Chief Malley's communication sought to address past and future police trainings, along with the department's community outreach efforts.

Councilmember Kepple stated her intent to answer the public's questions regarding police operations and to maintain Lakewood's reputation as a safe, inclusive place.

Councilmember Rader stated his intent to dig into policy surrounding the police department and make policing information transparent.

Councilmember Bullock stated his belief that Lakewood's Police and Fire Departments are performing well and noted the police department's updated use of force policy.

Mayor George stated her belief that Lakewood's Police Department should be a model for other departments, based on its use of technology and participation in the Ohio Collaborative. She noted that officers will continue to be trained in crisis intervention.

Acting Police Chief Wilkins introduced her team and asked Captain Sprague to give an overview of munitions used to address Councilmember Kepple's expressed concerns regarding tear gas and beanbag munitions. Captain Sprague stated that the Lakewood Police Department does not use tear gas for crowd control. If needed, police would deploy an OC Vapor, which is the least intrusive method of dispersion. Stepping into clean air would eliminate the effects of the agent and no decontamination is necessary. He reviewed tactics for dispersion, which would include a command to disperse and use of non-toxic smoke.

Councilmember Kepple asked if this was the policy of just Lakewood Police or whether it would include the Westshore Enforcement Bureau. Captain Sprague indicated that it would include the Westshore Bureau as well. It was noted that no one in the Westshore Bureau uses beanbag munitions. The only non-lethal projectile used by Lakewood Police is a pepper ball, which is a powdered form of pepper spray. Cleveland Police would have to comply with Lakewood's policy if they were to enter the city. There is an MOU set up between the two cities.

Councilmember Rader asked how Lakewood fits in as a member of the Westshore Enforcement Bureau and how the organization is set up. Captain Sprague specified how chain of command works with Westshore operations. Department policy within the 6 different cities belonging to the Westshore Enforcement Bureau is very consistent.

Chairperson Neff inquired as to when the department's anti-bias and diversity training would begin. Lieutenant Warner stated the next anti-bias de-escalation training will not be the first and that the department has had over 10,000 hours of human relations training over the last 5 years. The timeline on the new training is unclear. COVID-19 has relegated all training to online modules. Lt. Warner also provided information on crisis intervention training (CIT) and how the department works off of the Memphis model, which pushes for 25%-30% of officers in a department to be CIT trained. Lakewood currently has 27% of its officers CIT trained. Cleveland tried to train all of its officers and it did not work out well for them. Having all officers trained does not allow officers to build good rapport with people or mental health agencies. The department handles about 200 CIT calls a year.

Councilmember Kepple highlighted the importance of the 8 Can't Wait Strategies. Chief Malley noted the importance of de-escalation training and averting the use of force in crisis incidents. He noted that a CIT is on duty every shift. He cited department statistics that showed the very low arrest/use of force rates on crisis calls.

Mr. John Hill – 1075 Lakeland Ave. – While giving credit to Lakewood Police's efforts, Mr. Hill stated his belief that many people nationwide see the police as a monolith and proposed more community outreach by the department to showcase how it differs from others. He requested more transparency on department policies, procedures, and trainings.

Acting Chief Wilkins thanked Mr. Hill for his participation in the meeting and noted her support for active outreach and the citizen's police academy.

Lara Bobel – 1369 Gladys Ave. – Ms. Bobel inquired as to how crowd dispersion is executed and whether there is a resource online where the community can go to educate themselves on the topic. Police staff indicated that in order to start the process during a lawful assembly, laws must be broken. A dispersal order is then issued, followed by a light smoke to indicate to the police what the wind direction is and to give a signal to leave. It has not been done in the western suburbs. Mayor George noted that the department's annual report contains a plethora of information, however would be open to adding more information to be more transparent. An overview of the CIT dispatch process was given as well.

Councilmember Litten noted how the department has been on the forefront of crisis intervention.

Councilmember Kepple spoke to how Lakewood can learn lessons from other communities that have had community relations issues with the police.

Chief Malley stated how important training for officers is, and spoke to the humanity behind policing.

All attendees gave Chief Malley a round of applause for his years of service.

Chairperson Neff adjourned the meeting without objection.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.