



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Monday, May 23, 2022 at 8:45 AM
Council Chambers
4717 Main Avenue

Minutes

Opening of Committee Meeting

Call to Order

The meeting of the Ashtabula City Council Safety Forces Committee was called to order at 8:45 a.m. by Committee Chair, Vice President Michael Speelman.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair/Vice President Michael Speelman, Vice Chair/Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio

Absent: Member/Council President John Roskovics

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, City Solicitor Cecilia Cooper (arrived after roll call), Chief of Police Robert Stell, Chief of Fire Shawn Gruber

Sunshine Law Certification

A quorum was established as defined by Ashtabula City Council Rules of Order. The meeting met the requirements of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Open Meetings Act.

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Special Guest Presentation

Ashtabula Police Department Narcotics Investigation Unit

2021 was the first full year for the Ashtabula Police Department Narcotics Investigation Unit (NIU). NIU has grown to become a federal task force involving the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and other agencies. Chief Stell introduced Lieutenant Dibble, who heads the Detective Bureau, and Lieutenant Palinkas, Commander of the NIU Task Force. Lieutenant Palinkas explained that the NIU is divided into investigative, logistics, and drone teams. They are also a part of the federal Safe Streets Task Force (SSTF). Two full-time officers and seven part-time officers from the APD were sworn into the FBI as task force officers. The FBI hired five additional task force officers from other agencies. The SSTF is a collaborative effort between local, state, and federal law enforcement officers. Its goal is to target the "worst of the worst", gang activity, drug conspiracies, and firearms-related cases. Shootings and homicides fall under the umbrella of the SSTF. The federal task force asked NIU to focus on firearm enforcement. In the City of Ashtabula and across the nation, certain individuals are prohibited from owning firearms. Some individuals engage in "straw purchases", where a person legally purchases a firearm and provides it to someone who is prohibited from owning a firearm. Not all of the officers in the NIU are sworn in federally but do assist in major cases. Chief Stell developed training programs for those officers to increase various skills essential

to the needs of the NIU.

In 2021, NIU seized 29 pounds of marijuana, 5,954 grams (13 pounds) of methamphetamine, 1,666 grams (3.6 pounds) of powder cocaine, 177 grams of crack cocaine, and 259 grams of heroin or fentanyl, 34 guns, \$64,000, and executed 29 search warrants. NIU had a total of 216 cases; 178 were felonies and 38 were misdemeanors.

In 2022 and through to April, NIU seized 1,742 grams (3.8 pounds) of marijuana, 1,352 grams (2.9 pounds) of methamphetamine, 24 grams of crack cocaine, 78 grams of powder cocaine, and 227 grams of heroin or fentanyl. They seized 21 guns and \$6900 and executed 12 search warrants. So far, they have had 77 cases, 51 felonies, and 26 misdemeanors.

Interdiction operations are scheduled and paid for by grants. Multiple agencies unite and through routine traffic stops, successfully obtain illegal drugs.

Three officers have been trained and have federal pilot licenses as members of the drone team. Seized drug funds were used to purchase the drone. It has the capability to stealthily fly and carries a camera. NIU is not limited to narcotics and takes on any major crime such as homicides or missing persons.

Police Department – Chief's Report

April 2022 Reports

Calls for service are beginning to increase slowly. Five new police cruisers arrived last week, five more should arrive this week, and the remaining two by the end of June. Lieutenant Parkomaki was introduced and is another APD officer involved in NIU and commander of the road division and the swat team.

Fire Department – Chief's Report

The warmer weather slowly increases calls. Two calls were noteworthy; one was a fire fatality. No working smoke detector was present in the home. In partnership with the Red Cross, AFD provides and installs smoke detectors. According to the State Fire Marshall, all the fatalities from house fires across the state had one thing in common: no smoke detectors. The other call was a Coast Guard call about a boating incident behind the break wall. AFD used the police and fire boat and rescued the injured boater.

City Manager's Report

Mr. Wofford, the first recipient of the Shelby scholarship award, passed all the requirements and will be an APD officer soon. Discussion with APD about providing security for AMHA is ongoing. On foot patrol, Officer DeAngelo has been visible in the parks after summer recess from Kent State Ashtabula campus and will be walking on Main Avenue, in the Harbor, and the parks throughout the summer.

Lieutenant Parkomaki

APD Lieutenant Gillespie was recognized for leading the state in DRE submissions. DRE stands for Drug Recognition Expert and is a state-wide program focusing on impaired drivers. In a four-month period, he identified nine impaired drivers by using the DRE training. Lt. Gillespie is the only DRE-trained officer in Ashtabula County and he will be recognized at an awards ceremony in Texas.

City Solicitor Cooper

Fireworks are illegal in the City of Ashtabula. Individuals may not possess them, use them, nor ignite them.

Unfinished Business

New Business

Jo Misener requested annual reports from the APD and AFD and reported a graffiti problem on many buildings and signs on Main Avenue and other areas of the city. Chief Stell said APD recently

caught a few individuals, but it's difficult to catch them in the act. The act of graffiti is a misdemeanor.

Mrs. Foglio read a letter from a resident expressing concern about the sun causing visibility issues at the stop signs near Mother of Sorrows Church.

Next Meeting

The June meeting was canceled. The next meeting is scheduled for July 25, 2022, at 8:45 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 09:21 AM.

Attested By:

Clerk of Council, Stacy H. Senskey