



City of Ashtabula
Ashtabula City Council
Safety Forces Committee
Monday, January 23, 2023 at 8:45 AM
4717 Main Avenue, Ashtabula, OH 44004

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 Speelman.

Roll Call

Members Present: Chair: Council Vice President Michael Speelman, Member: Council President John Roskovics

Absent: Vice Chair: Ward 1 Councilor Kym Foglio

Officers Present: City Manager James Timonere, City Solicitor Cooper, Assistant Solicitor Colgan, Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan

Ashtabula Department Heads Present: Police Chief Robert Stell, Fire Chief Shawn Gruber

Visitors: None.

Sunshine Law Certification

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

Welcome and Acknowledgement of Visitors

Police Department – Chief's Report

December 2022 Statistics

Chief Stell reported nothing unusual. He did state that numbers are down as they usually are during the colder months. He reported about 200-250 more calls during the May through September months. They are still busy and have some good things going on that he will be able to report more on as the year progresses.

January-December 2022 Statistics

The Police Department annual report is partially completed and should be finalized by the end of February.

Member Roskovics asked Chief Stell what happens to the juveniles when arrested, as there is no YDC anymore. Chief Stell stated that the juveniles can be listed on the report as an arrest but it could just be that they were given a citation and get to stay at home with their parents until they have their court hearing. Other times, they are arrested and brought to the Family Resource Center located within City Hall. After being processed at the Family Resource Center, they can be placed in a facility and held until they go to court or be released back to their parents. The latter being the most common. Everything is handled on a case-by-case basis.

Chair Speelman asked Chief Stell if they track juveniles who they have frequent interactions with into adulthood to determine if the Family Resource Center is working. Chief Stell stated they do not have anything official but they tend to remember individuals who they have encountered frequently and also have records to refer back to.

Fire Department – Chief's Report

Chief Gruber stated he is working on the annual report and will have it completed by the next Safety Forces Committee meeting. As he had been working on the report he noticed they were a little busier than normal. They ended up receiving about 2,200 calls.

Chief Gruber stressed the importance of having working smoke detectors installed throughout homes. He stated that in situations where there are working smoke detectors, there has not been a fire fatality. All fatalities come from homes that do not have any working smoke detectors. He stated that if anyone needs a smoke detector the Fire Department can provide them and can even come to install them. The new detectors have a ten-year battery.

City Manager's Report

City Manager Timonere stated that promotional exams would be held for both the Police and Fire Departments. An entrance exam for the Fire Department is needed and will most likely occur later this year.

City Solicitor's Report

A potential ordinance creating a more streamlined process for evidence destruction

City Solicitor Cooper stated that as they are getting ready to transition to the new MATRIX software and into a new evidence officer, they need to get the evidence room cleaned out. She stated there is evidence there from 2017. The process of getting rid of evidence has become more difficult and notice to the property owner or the interested party has to be made before disposal can be completed. If the owner is unknown, then a notice has to be advertised, usually in the newspaper, unless an ordinance allows for a different form of disposition.

City Solicitor Cooper requested permission from the committee to draft an ordinance that would bypass some publication requirements while staying in compliance with the Constitution. This ordinance would allow for property disposal without published notice in the newspaper and they could potentially just put a list on the City's website and on the Police Department's Facebook for a certain number of weeks that would satisfy the requirements instead of newspaper publication. If permission is granted, this would be brought to the council within the next few meetings as they want to make sure everything is worded correctly.

Motion: Chair Speelman moved to grant the City Solicitor's office permission to draft an ordinance to dispose of evidence in a more efficient manner in accordance with recent Supreme Court findings; Member Roskovics seconded.

Discussion: None.

VOICE VOTE

Yeas: Chair Michael Speelman, Member John Roskovics

Nays: None

Motion passed.

No thru traffic signs

Assistance Solicitor Colgan explained that she had received a call from an officer in regard to a no thru trucks sign on Wade Ave. This situation was handled. However, upon looking into the traffic

section of the Codified Ordinances, there is an appendix that lists all of the street signs and she is not sure if the Wade Ave. no-thru trucks sign was approved. This appendix goes back to the 1960s or the 1970s and she is not sure when they were last checked.

Police Department map accuracy

Assistant Solicitor Colgan stated that the Codified Ordinances state the Police Department should have a map that shows where all the approved traffic control devices have been installed. Since the Solicitor's office received the call from the Police Department about the Wade Ave. sign, it is believed they do not have a map. A process is needed to verify that the list within the Codified Ordinances is accurate. She also noted that the spelling is listed as "thru" in some places and "through" in others. Some resolutions passed only included the verbiage "to install signs" and did not list which street the signs would be placed on. Ms. Colgan stated someone would need to take on the administrative task of going through and verifying everything is accurate and either locating or developing a map.

Member Roskovics asked if the no thru trucks signs mean trucks cannot use that road unless they have a stop on the road. Ms. Colgan stated that is correct. Trucks cannot use the streets with these signs posted just to get from one end of the road to the other. They can use them if they have a stop on the road and can proceed to the other end after the delivery is made.

Chief Stell stated he had never seen a map. City Solicitor Cooper asked if a map was really needed then. Assistant Solicitor Colgan stated that if someone is ticketed for driving a thru truck there has to be proof that the signage was approved for that street. Ms. Colgan mentioned this was an issue with the Wade Ave. sign as she was unable to locate an approved ordinance for the sign. City Manager Timonere stated that Wade Ave. from Ohio Ave. and then to the West is located in Saybrook even though the school is annexed into the City. The sign may be located in Saybrook and this would be a Saybrook issue. It is also possible that when the school was built there was nothing put into the Codified Ordinances.

Member Roskovics asked what makes a street eligible for a no thru trucks sign. City Manager Timonere stated it would be up to the council to pass an ordinance based on many things. Mr. Timonere gave an example of large trucks going in and out of a residential area which would tear up the roads faster. In this case, if there is an alternative way to get to where they are going, then the council can decide to put a sign on the residential road stating that no thru traffic is allowed.

Chair Speelman asked what would be required if we decided a map was no longer necessary. Solicitor Cooper stated if it is decided a map is no longer needed, an ordinance to repeal the Codified Ordinance requiring a map would be needed. Mr. Speelman stated he believes the council will do what the Solicitor's office and Police and Fire Departments think is best as far as signage and maps. Ms. Cooper stated she would speak with the Chief about it. She stated she had a trial recently where a truck was hauling an excavator down a road that had no thru trucks and produced a waiver for the no thru traffic from ODOT. City Manager Timonere stated there is a permit required from the City Manager's office for hauling on no thru traffic roads. He stated that usually, ODOT does not trump what the city has in place. Ms. Cooper reiterated she would meet with the Chief as they have to make sure road signs match ordinances.

Unfinished Business

None.

New Business

Chief Stell stated he forgot to mention that the annual statistics show that there were 15,577 calls for service in 2022. This is the average for the department over the last several years. However, going back 17 to 18 years ago, they were averaging between 22,000 and 24,000 calls for service. This is

because the crime rates over the last 15 years have gone down for things such as robberies and thefts. However, we are seeing more violent crimes and drug issues now than we used to.

Chief Stell reports they will be starting Safety Town up again. They received permission to have a location on the elementary campus. They have received donations from several businesses and clubs. The Art Center stated they would do the artwork on the buildings. Other programs have voiced interest in having booths for this event, such as the Imagination Library and the Lion's Club. They are tentatively scheduling this for the second and third week in July. They are still looking for donations. Their target is \$5,000 to get started as they have to buy everything new and build new buildings since Safety Town has not been around for about 20 years. Chair Speelman asked if private citizens could make donations and Chief Stell informed us that they could. Checks should be made payable to FOP26, their local police union, and put Safety Town in the memo portion. Chief Stell mentioned that the Fire Department would be working with them as well. Chief Gruber stated he believes this is a great way to get in touch with the younger kids. Safety Town educates them and also helps build a good relationship with the Police and Fire Departments. Kids eligible will be those going into kindergarten. In the past, about 160-200 kids from the city would go through this program, so they are expecting a good turnout.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on February 27th at 8:45 a.m.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:11 AM by Chair Michael Speelman.

Attested By: Clerk of Council McKenzie Burgan