

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
OF FEBRUARY 8, 2021 @ 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM

In Attendance: **Vermilion City Council:**
Steve Herron, President of Council; Monica Stark, Council at Large; Emily Skahen, Ward One; F. Loucka, Ward Two; Steve Hlovacs, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five

Administration:
Jim Forthofer, Mayor; Chris Howard, City Engineer; Chris Hartung, Police Chief; Amy Hendricks, Finance Director; Tony Valerius, Service Director; Chris Stempowski, Fire Chief

Call to Order: Chairman, Brian Holmes, RESOLVED THAT this Health & Safety Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

TOPIC ONE: Fire Chief's Report

Chief Stempowski reported the department responded to 24 incidents in the month of January. He indicated they are in the process of relocating over into the new facility and most of the punch list items have been addressed with a few outstanding exterior items, which will be addressed in the spring. He said everyone has keys and access now. He said the radio tower was relocated last week and IT advised him that radio communications are up and running, and they do have a new console, so it will take time for personnel to adjust and train. The phones and computers have been installed and are working. He tipped his hat to the IT department for a great job. They had concerns with the functionality of some overhead doors, which has been addressed.

He reported they hired one firefighter and he will be meeting with the mayor this week to hire another. They both have certifications. He will meet with another person this week and another two applicants within the next couple of weeks, as they will need certifications so they will need to go to the Fire Academy which starts in late March.

He said three firefighters are currently attending the Fire Academy for the Fire Safety Inspector Course which will add inspectors to their Fire Prevention Bureau, which is a plus.

He said the fire department responded to an accident on Saturday morning (2:25 a.m.). The initial call was for a MVA (rollover and entrapment). Upon arrival it was not an entrapment as the occupant was ejected from the vehicle. They were operating from the eastbound lanes and mitigated the situation. The OSP asked the fire department to assist them on the westbound side of the highway as this is where the accident began, so their investigation was going to start on the side. They relocated over to the westbound lane and once in position within a five-minute timeframe, the last fire apparatus in line on the inside lane was rear-ended by a vehicle. The vehicle went under the backside of the fire apparatus and it caught fire and the occupant was trapped. They had six firefighters in the apparatus that was struck. The fire was extinguished,

and the occupant was removed and placed with Life Care Ambulance. They also requested mutual aid from Amherst Fire for support and extrication as the apparatus had their equipment scattered across the highway and some of the equipment was damaged. They were able to use lines for fire suppression and extrication equipment from the engine that was in front of the apparatus that was struck, so everything went smooth under the circumstances. After this was under control, they had more firefighters that were treated on scene and one was transported to Mercy for observation and treatment and was released. The following day another firefighter experienced some symptoms, so they sent him to the emergency room. Also, today a third firefighter experienced symptoms, so they sent him over to the hospital as well. All were treated and released, and he is thankful everyone is okay under the circumstances. The way their apparatus was positioned is the way they were trained. It is very fortunate that everyone was in the vehicle opposed to being out of it. They will continue to review this incident with the Ohio State Patrol.

B. Holmes said this reminds them that the first responders are in harms way, so he asked people when they see emergency lights on the road to move over to the other lane. He wished everyone a quick recovery.

He pressed upon the issue of ice safety especially with the cold weather. He asked the community to not put first responders in a situation where they are responding to situations where they too could get hurt. Chief Stempowski said personally he does not like being on ice and he does not like seeing people on ice for the obvious reasons. He understands there are sportsmen that like to do this, but they never know the thickness of the ice. They do train and have equipment, but they would rather not have to use this equipment. He discouraged people from getting on the ice as it is just not safe because they never know.

Chief Stempowski said the heavy rescue truck that was involved in the accident is out of service and they do not know the extent of the damage. The truck was a 1996 model, so they will get it back in service as soon as possible if it can be. They did relocate their equipment over to another pumper. S. Herron said the entire community keeps all the firefighters in their thoughts and prayers and thanked them for what they do.

TOPIC TWO: Police Chief's Report

Chief Hartung reported on a bomb threat which caused evacuation at the middle school. It is still under investigation. He complimented the teachers for doing a phenomenal job in evacuating the students. He thanked the fire department for assisting in the evacuation in getting the kids over to the high school. He thanked Rodney Johnston who accompanied him in the lobby while they waited on the bomb dogs.

He said they received 30 guns safes through the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. The purpose of the grant was to get these out to individuals who have children in the home and a handgun in the home and they need a way to secure it. He said the information is on their Facebook page and the first 30 who are city residents that reach out to him should email him at chartung@vermillionpolice.com and they will get one of the safes. He said Dispatcher

Katie Kopriva applied for the grant, so kudos to her. He said he has already given 15 safes out and there are 15 remaining, and they will try to get some more.

He reported all units will be completing their CPR, AD, and First-Aid training over the next couple of weeks. He said they got behind with COVID, but these certifications will be handled. He finished writing and updating the job descriptions for all the positions, which were submitted to the union for their input. This month he and Captain Graham will go through their entire rules and regulations manual and will update it.

B. Holmes addressed the bomb threat as he has three children that attend the school. He was rest-assured immediately that the situation was being handled by Vermilion PD, Vermilion Fire, and the school. He was told everything went smoothly and everyone was safe. He said his youngest child attends the middle school and she said everything went like clockwork. He thanked the first responders, the school, and the teachers for handling this situation very well.

He encouraged folks to reach out to the chief if they need a gun safe as this is a good program. He said all too often they are called when a child accidentally gets ahold of a firearm, and sometimes the end is not great.

B. Holmes adjourned the meeting after no further discussion came before the committee.

Next Meeting: March 8, 2021 @ 7pm / Location via ZOOM.

*Transcribed by:
Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*