

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
OF MARCH 8, 2021 @ 7:00 p.m. via ZOOM

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

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

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 23 incidents in the month of February for a total year to date of 47. He said the department had training all day yesterday and they had Cleveland State come in for a Haz-mat Operations refresher course. They have additional training in a couple weeks from Findley University.

He said the department began running out of the new facility the evening of February 22 as IT finalized their communications during the day. They are still moving items from Ohio Street and the Service Center, and Ohio Street is probably about 80 percent vacated and it is still a work in progress. They will use the back garage behind the Ohio Street facility for some storage. They are looking at an outbuilding for the new facility. All the phones numbers listed for the public for the new fire station have been redirected over to the new facility, so there are no interruptions to phone service.

He said they were waiting to find out if the breathing air system at Station #2 was salvageable and they were told it can be modified to get it up and running. This can be done for under \$3,000 as opposed to looking at a refurbished or used system that is around \$15,000 - \$20,000, or a new system for \$50,000. Therefore, they will get this system modified and they will look at grant options in the future.

The antenna and tower have been relocated from the Ohio Street site to the new station in February. There are some new things that IT is working on with their backup repeater.

He said they are working with the insurance company on Truck 98 which was involved in the incident on Route 2. They are not sure if the truck is serviceable or totaled at this time. They are working with other companies to get quotes and opinions on the truck. The rescue equipment on this truck has been transferred over to one of their fire engines, so it is all in service.

B. Holmes asked if the breathing station is for the entire station. Chief Stempowski said it is for filling the SCBA's. The new station has a newer one and it is fully functional. B. Holmes asked if the department was doing okay budget wise. C. Stempowski said they are doing okay.

E. Skahen asked if the phone numbers will be forwarded or changed to new phone numbers. C. Stempowski said the numbers will remain the same. They were just redirected from the Ohio station to the new facility. A. Hendricks said eventually there will be one published number for the Fire Department and then it will give the caller options to make it more simplified. B. Holmes said if anyone needs to contact the Fire Department, they should dial 911 for emergencies.

TOPIC TWO: Police Chief's Report

Chief Hartung reported the department recently held an awards ceremony to recognize officers for their work in 2020. He said Dave James was recognized as their Dispatcher of the Year, Andrew Davis as their Full Time Officer of the Year, and Patrolman Marshall Murphy as their Part Time Officer of the Year, as well as other awards. He said these were well-deserved. He thanked Chaplin Cooper and Foursquare Church for providing the facility for the ceremony.

He said recently the department completed their CPR, AD, and First-Aid training for the officers. He thanked Chief Stempowski for generously allowed them to use the new training room at the new station.

He said there has been a lot of changes with the law and he updated their Policy and Procedure Manual by looking at the trends in litigation as far as organization and risk management, which dictates how they train their personnel to minimize potential litigation in the future. He said Ohio Revised Code deals with the restraint or confinement of pregnant women and changes are going into effect in April. There is a lot of issues as far as when you can use handcuffs on a person who is pregnant, and when you must consult with their physician to find out if it is okay for these types of things, and for the fact that violations of this section can result in Civil Rights violations, which can be substantial litigation for the city. He said they are looking at the Police Reform bills that are in the Senate even though they apply to federal law enforcement officers there is a lot of these provisions that are tied into states as far as federal funding, so they must be compliant with those. He said as a police administrator this is causing him to rewrite policies. They are staying on top of it and they are adjusting accordingly to make sure their training and polices align with whatever the current trends are to provide the best in risk management mitigation for the city.

B. Holmes thanked the Chief and his officers for everything they do and mentioned he would appreciate an invite in the future to attend their award ceremonies. He thanked the Chief for his hard work in writing the policies as an administrator. Chief Hartung said because of the socially distant requirements of COVID this year, they minimized the external invitations of the award ceremony.

TOPIC THREE: VFD Strategic Planning

Mayor Forthofer said since he has been Mayor, he and City employees have been identifying critical departments in the City that would benefit from a review and strategic planning. He said the first example was the Finance Department as Finance Director Amy Hendricks did a deep dive on the finance department and consulted some outside organizations and did a thorough review and orientation of the department, and they can all attest it is a much better department for it. Secondly, was the Information Technologies Department and Lifecare was brought in and given the charge of identifying what the city has and drawing up a strategic plan for the next several years for the IT department. Currently, the Wastewater Treatment Plant is being reviewed by a professional outside consultant in preparation for a strategic plan.

Currently, he and Chief Stempowski has brought in outside help to review and create a strategic plan for the Vermilion Fire Department. Retired Sandusky Fire Chief Paul Ricci was introduced to the full department of officers and firefighters at a meeting Saturday. He conveyed his impressive credentials including 32 years in firefighting starting as a volunteer and his significant training certifications, along with his experience running programs in strategic planning and officer development. Chief Ricci will interview every member of the VFD who makes themselves available and they will work together to develop a strategic plan and present it to him and the Chief. As a plan developed collaboratively by the officers and firefighters, ongoing implementation will be driven by those department members. He feels the fire department deserves a long-term plan.

B. Holmes said it is important that all policies and procedures are reviewed. Also, with the letter council received from firefighters and tackling their issues, he feels it is important to get this all ironed out because the Fire Department does a great job for the city. He looks for positive change on what can come out of this.

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

Next Meeting: April 12, 2021 @ 7pm at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio

*Transcribed by:
Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*