

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
APRIL 12, 2021

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

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 Chiefs Report

Chief Stempowski reported the department responded to 12 incidents in the month of March for a total year to date of 59. He said their breathing air system issue has been resolved and it is scheduled for repair to save the department money. He thanked Council for their urgent attention to the purchase of the new rescue truck, which will be a perfect fit for the department. They are expecting a mid to late June delivery and they will review all the specs of the truck with the rep this week. He said they will be doing some radio and pager reprogramming as there was a frequency change that had to be reentered into the radios and pagers.

He reported they are planning a dedication date for the new fire department on May 15 and as the specifics are worked out, they will notify Council and the community. G. Fisher said if more than three members of City Council attend the dedication then she would need to declare this as a Council meeting.

He extended condolences to the Johnston family (Fire Marshall and Lieutenant) as a loved one recently passed away. Additionally, he received word that former long-serving Fire Captain Larry White passed away, so he extended his condolences to his family as well.

Chief Stempowski reviewed his year-end summary report for 2020, which is on file in the clerk's office. In summary, the department responded to 211 incidents in 2020, and 12 were in the contractual portion of Brownhelm Township. He noted response times for the department overall were 7 minutes 44 seconds within the city limits, which is a pretty good response time for a volunteer paid on call fire department. He said 2020 was challenging due to the COVID pandemic, so they took extra time in their responses with additional PPE. He reviewed training and accumulated hours throughout the year for personnel. He touched on the CARES ACT Funds and expressed his appreciated support from Brownhelm Township. Throughout the year with the coordinated effort between the Vermilion Fire Department, community members, and the Vermilion Fire Company they tried to lighten things up for the community as they took the Easter Bunny and Santa Claus around the community for the kids. They received \$500 in

donations that went to Grace's Kitchen and the Vermilion Congregational Church for their food pantries. Lastly, he addressed the roster of personnel who served in 2020 and he said they are certainly grateful for every one of them for what they did for the department for the year.

B. Holmes asked how the assessment was going with Chief Richie. Chief Stempowski said it is progressing and he will be meeting with him sometime this week, so he will have more information by the end of the week. B. Holmes said as far as the breathing air system will the city be repairing it or an outside company. C. Stempowski said Breathing Air Systems out of southern Ohio will be repairing it. B. Holmes asked if this would give the department longevity. C. Stempowski said they are hoping so as these systems range between \$30,000 to \$50,000. It is a solid unit, and it has served them well, so they are hoping these modifications that cost under \$3,000 will provide them some good mileage. B. Holmes asked what the life expectancy is on these systems. Chief Stempowski said they have had this system for nearly 30 years. He said they do have a new one at the new facility as it was relocated from the Ohio Street facility.

TOPIC TWO: Police Chief's Report

Chief Hartung reported Patrolman Bob McLaughlin (part-time ranks) resigned from the department. He acknowledged he was a great officer who did a lot of work in narcotics in Huron County, and they are sorry to see him go. The department hired part-time officer Pedro Reyes who started his on-the-job training. He moved here about three years ago from Puerto Rico with his father and he is a remarkable young man, and his work ethic is amazing. He asked everyone to introduce themselves if they see him out and about. Additionally, Dominick Fleming will be sworn in tomorrow and will start the on-the-job training as well.

He said summer is approaching and they are starting to see increased activity and they recently had dual bar fights, so they are getting ready for the summer season.

He provided Council with a copy of his annual report last week via email, which is in the clerk's office for review.

He acknowledged Sgt. Davis' retirement and Rich Lapis who had retired as a lieutenant and who came back to the department as a dispatcher. He had put in 40 years in the department. He said Sgt. Davis was critical in the Julene Simko homicide of which she appealed to the Ninth District Court in November of 2020 and they are still waiting on the Appellate Courts decision.

He proceeded to review the 2020 annual report and noted that harassment and menacing cases decreased because nobody was around each other due to COVID. However, overdoses doubled, and fatalities remained about the same. The department's total calls for service numbered 39,299 down about 600 from the previous year. Watercraft hours numbered 545.5 hours, down from 578 the previous year. He addressed a big movement about transparency and use of force and noted he keeps every report of use of force.

He addressed the Sailorway bomb threat and explained the situation, which resulted in an arrest as it was tied to X-Box Live. The person responsible lives in Columbia, Tennessee so their police

department will pursue this further. He praised Detective Dan Shupe for a bang-up job he did on this case.

He reported on the numerous vehicle break-ins in the Woodlands and Valleyview areas. He warned the community to lock their stuff.

He said on April 24 from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. they will have their drug turn in, so extra medications can be disposed at the agency. No needles or liquids will be excepted. Their steak fry will be held on May 8, which is a critical fundraiser for the FOP who does a lot in offsetting their costs for their K-9 programs and their K-9 vehicle is getting to the point where it will need to be replaced soon. During May 17 - 21, they will have their range qualification and he invited council. He said the department has been trained on Defensive Tactics.

Lastly, he said the department updated their RC-2 for records retention and eliminated records they do not maintain anymore.

B. Holmes thanked the Chief for his annual report and thanked all the officers and staff for doing a wonderful job for the city.

S. Herron asked if all the officers are qualified for the Crisis Intervention NAMI training. Chief Hartung said initially they shoot for 25% of an agency as the recommendation, but he is shooting for 100% and he thinks there are about four officers that need to be certified and two of them would have been if it had not been for COVID.

S. Herron said administering Narcan all the time must get old, and he wanted to tell the department how much he appreciates it because it is a very difficult part of the job. Chief Hartung said they go through a lot of Narcan and with their support from civic agencies it allows them to do this because they do not have to pay for it. He emphasized how important it is to have this support because this is a number, he will never be able to pay.

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

Next Meeting: May 10, 2021 @ 7pm at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio

*Transcribed by:
Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*