

HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES
MAY 10, 2021

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; 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

Mayor Forthofer reported on behalf of Chief Stempowski by saying the fire department responded to 16 incidents in the month of April for a total year to date of 75. The new station dedication is scheduled for May 15 from noon to 3:00 p.m. The Vermilion Fire Company will provide light snacks and refreshments, and station tours will be provided by Fire Department personnel and they will follow CDC, state, and local guidelines for COVID, which means wear a mask and be distant.

He indicated the Chief Richie evaluation was completed and presented to the department staff on May 2. The Fire Chief and Mayor Forthofer met with the department personnel to further discuss the evaluation and expectations following the report presented by Chief Richie. There were many positive comments to the report and suggestions and improvements were in multiple areas; some subcommittees have already formed and are functioning. Much participation has been evidence from the personnel. Many suggestions were presented already on the desk of the Chief. Recommendations from Chief Richie came from many years of leadership and experience. Chief Richie's time and effort to this department of the evaluation was greatly appreciated.

Condolences were expressed to the McCale family for their loss. Bill McCale is the fire department's chief engineer.

B. Holmes said Chief Richie's report was excellent and done professionally. He is glad the Chief and officers are taking it seriously and moving forward, and especially going over the training and getting the training that they need. Hopefully, they will continue making improvements and making the fire department better.

TOPIC TWO:Police Chief's Report

Chief Hartung reported the Simko murder verdict was upheld, and it will hold the conviction. She has 45 days to appeal to the Ohio Supreme Court.

He said the department had a pursuit as officers were called yesterday to the Ritter Library for an individual that was looking into a jeep. When officers responded, Officer Kopniske located the suspect who was somebody they had prior dealings with. He advised him what the nature of the call was, and the suspect told the police that he had friend that had a jeep there and he was there to pick up the jeep. When the officer asked for identification, this person said he did not have one, nor was he required to have an ID and identified himself as a sovereign citizen. They had an exchange and the individual reached up and put the vehicle in drive and took off, which caused a pursuit out to the area of Risdan Road. The vehicle lost control into a culvert and the individual took off running across the golf course. He said while the individual was running, he kept his arm down to his side, which is usually indicative of hiding something; possibly a weapon – there was not a weapon that was observed, but they believed it was a 9mm, but it was not confirmed. He said Erie County helped and they searched the area, and they did not have good success in the K-9 tracking due to the weather conditions. They are actively working with other individuals on this case. They have charges with Judge Dolyk for a felony charge. There will be other charges once they have this person in custody. He said he has had a lot of questions regarding whether this individual is a danger to the community and based on the interactions he is not a threat to individuals, but he has more of an issue with government structure and he does not like police officers. If anyone encounters the individual or they have any information, then he would advise not to approach this individual as he should be considered armed and dangerous, and the people should let the police handle this. He said they have a lot of good information and they are making headway and they should have this resolved relatively quickly. He said they had another pursuit that ended up in Lorain where the individual wrecked.

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

Next Meeting: June 14, 2021 @ 7pm at the Vermilion Municipal Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio

*Transcribed by:
Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*