

## HEALTH & SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 27, 2022

**In Attendance:** **Vermilion City Council:** *Monica Stark, President of Council; Steve Herron, Council At Large; Pat Stein, Ward One; Greg Drew, Ward Three; Barb Brady, Ward Four; Brian Holmes, Ward Five. Absent: Teresa Mayle, Ward Two*

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

**Call to Order:** Barb Brady, Chairwoman, RESOLVED THAT this Health & Safety Committee comprised of the committee of the whole does now come to order.

---

### **TOPIC ONE: Fire Chiefs Report**

Chief Brown reported the total incidents for May was 19 and to date they have had 25. He noted he has been meeting with all the firefighters and officers in the department to get a feel for who they are, what they do, what they like, and what they want, as well as giving them his expectations. His first week with the department started off with a bang as they had a drowning off Showse Park and it did not have the outcome that anybody wanted, but from a fire department standpoint, they utilized resources they have. They had a boat in the water within 25 minutes looking for the individual, which in any technical rescue type call, things just do not happen super quick, which is the unfortunate part, but they must be safe in doing it. He said first on scene was Dave Coen who retired as Assistant Chief two days before he started. He was there looking with his binoculars and wanting to help in anyway he could. He said Dave gave a little over 46 years to the Vermilion Fire Department and is 76 years old. Everyone he has spoken to has told him that Dave would physically do anything you ask him to do, and it did not matter as he was that dedicated and was a great asset to the department.

He further explained that in the next coming month he will start evaluating the department and will be looking at training and how they take care of their vehicles and facility. He will then prioritize what they need to work on. He said the department will take a little survey to give them an idea of things they need to focus on. Additionally, he will be meeting with chiefs from surrounding departments, as well as other individuals who help the department.

B. Brady welcomed Bill Brown as the city's new Fire Chief.

### **TOPIC TWO:Police Chiefs Report**

Chief Hartung explained that on June 15 he received a call regarding a swimmer who was in a boat who went off the side and they lost contact with him. He said there were a tremendous number of resources for this situation, but it was not the outcome any of them wanted. He thanked the Vermilion Fire Department, Lorain County EMA, and the Lorain County Dive Team.

He said they had seven agencies assisting. He said questions they received pertained to why they did not have the divers in the water at the time. Unfortunately, in a situation like this it becomes a point where they go from a rescue to a recovery. When they go to recovery, they do not keep the divers in the water during an indefinite period. The waters in Lake Erie have limited visibility and they have sand that goes to rock, and then it is like a bowling alley down there from the slate or shale, or whatever is on the bottom, so in these situations they use side scan sonar. There is a specialist from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources that the city used to find a car right off the side of Valley Harbor and they found the car right away. In this situation, when they find something, then they can call the diver back in to attempt to recover, but it is a very volatile situation down there. Traditionally, this time of year when they have an incident such as this, you can almost set your watch to 72 hours as the victim will come back up to the surface, and then you can do recovery. He mentioned that Captain Graham, Sergeant Reising, and Patrolman Beckwith were down there at that point, and Patrolman Beckwith was able to recover him at the shoreline. He extended sympathies to the family and said they are waiting on the toxicology report back from the coroner's office and he will have an update when this occurs. B. Brady asked if this was all mutual support. Chief Hartung said yes, and it was a tremendous number of resources. He said obviously it is not cost effective for them to invest in diving gear for something they deal with only a few times every five years. He said the individual that drowned off Cranberry Creek last year resurfaced off the mouth of the river a few months ago, so he was under about six months. He said the city has used the Lorain County Dive Team and Swift Water Rescue during flood events down at Riverside Drive. If they need to get people out of their houses, they are a tremendous asset. He said the fire chief must ask for them. Chief Brown noted they requested the Lorain County Dive Team before they were even on scene through the radio because they knew these were the resources they would need. He said Huron and Lorain also showed up with their boat.

Chief Hartung reported they have received many quality-of-life complaints from residents around the Main Street beach area that mostly deal with individuals from 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. now that the mansion is down. The officers have been instructed to heavily increase their presence in the area during these problematic times. He has had conversation with the Mayor and the Parks Board relative to signage and improvements in the area. He said there is no parking permitted on the grass. They will continue to make sure this is a great place to be without too many distractions. Chief Hartung said according to the ordinance the park closes at 11 p.m. Mayor Forthofer noted that at the last Parks Board meeting he brought this issue up and it is being considered as to whether it should be 11 p.m. or move it up to dusk. He said if this requires an amendment to the ordinance, then it will come before Council for approval.

Chief Hartung explained there has been confusion on the fireworks ordinance, so he wanted to clarify the primary concern with the State of Ohio's law allowing the fireworks as it states that anybody on private property or has permission of the property owner, can discharge 1.4g classification of a firework. He said anything in a Phantom Firework store is 1.4. He said 1.3 is what they shoot off the break wall. He said there is nothing in there that says you can shoot it off and you must be two hundred feet from your neighbor's house. It just says if you are on your property, you can discharge it, so it was essential that the city's existing ordinance that restricts it was on the books before this took effect on July 1. If council wants to revisit the ordinance this is

fine. B. Brady asked if they currently do not allow fireworks at all. Chief Hartung said yes. He said one of the most stressful times in being a police officer is on the Fourth of July because they have probably had 5,500 people out of the 10,500 population that is shooting something off at some point during the night. Their focus must be on the people that are irresponsible and may have had too much to drink. He said last year somebody was driving up and down the street in a golf cart firing roman candles off at people and these are the ones they will need to focus on.

He reported last week they graduated 66 kids from the Safety Town Program. He said Katie Lulovics did a fantastic job with the program.

He expressed condolences to the family of retired Chief of Police of Lorain, Cel Rivera who recently passed away. He also expressed condolences to the family of Fred Barck who passed away on Friday. He was in the interview that hired him, and he wrote him his first ticket. When Fred retired in 1999 from the Vermilion Police Department, he presented him with a framed copy of this ticket.

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

*Next Meeting: July 18, 2022 @ 7 p.m. at the Vermilion Municipal Court Complex, 687 Decatur Street, Vermilion, Ohio.*

*Transcribed by: Gwen Fisher, Certified Municipal Clerk*