

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

July 2, 2020

In Attendance:

Members Present: Chairperson, Ann Smith, Larry Chapman, Barry Mitchell, Mayor Janet Winkler

Others Present: Town Manager, Rebecca Bentley, Chief of Police, Richard Blevins, and Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson

Call to Order:

Ann called the meeting to order. The agenda for the meeting included the following:

- Status Report on the new business "Show Love Not Hate Crab Shack"
 - Discuss Demographics of the Police Department
 - "8 Can't Wait" Reform
 - Discuss Policy for Speed Humps
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Status Report on New Business – "Show Love Not Hate – Crab Shack:"

Chief Richard Blevins gave a report on the status of the new business "Show Love Not Hate – Crab Shack." He reviewed how the business started 3 weeks ago in the BBQ Man restaurant building, located at 2608 Hickory Blvd. Chief Blevins stated that Mr. Harry Maris, owner of the building, lives upstairs, and he rented the downstairs to Baybay Sosa, a rapper from Hickory. Chief Blevins stated that the first complaints about the business came through the Lenoir Police Department. Neighbors behind the business reported that 100+ people were at a party at 1:00 a.m. at the establishment, and the music and noise were too loud. The call went to Lenoir P.D. due to the property adjoining the City of Lenoir City Limits.

Chief Blevins stated that the establishment has not received the proper permitting to serve alcohol; however, a young lady was pulled over in Town for driving while impaired, and she told the officers she was coming from the Crab Shack. Chief Blevins added that it has also been brought to his attention that the establishment is also lacking proper permitting from the Health Department.

Chief Blevins stated that this past weekend, another event was held at the Crab Shack that got loud and out of hand. Mr. Maris decided the activities being held by the tenants was not acceptable, and he kicked the tenants out and banned them from the premises.

Chief Blevins thanked Rebecca, Teresa Kinney, Town Planner, and his Department for helping get information on the tenants and handle the situation.

Taking a Look at the Demographics of the Police Department:

Chief Blevins reviewed the demographics of the Police Department with the Committee. The Department is currently fully staffed with 14 officers and 1 civilian (secretary). He stated that the median age of the Department is 32.5 years old. There are two officers who serve as Resource Officers at the CCC & TI Campus, and one officer who serves as Resource Officer at Hudson Middle School. He commented that Hudson Elementary School does not currently have a resource officer. Chief Blevins stated that one of his newest officers, Anthony Horton, comes to the Department from Hickory, NC, and he is not only a seasoned officer but is also a hazardous materials instructor, which is a great asset for us.

Chief Blevins stated that he feels fortunate to have his officers, and he is very happy to be fully staffed.

Discuss "8 Can't Wait" Reform:

Chief Blevins stated that police departments have guidelines for the use of force. An officer whose use of force is within the guidelines is considered to be operating "by the book;" however, an officer who violates the guidelines is putting his career at risk. Chief Blevins stated that there is a campaign now across the nation for police departments to implement changes in their policies to stop brutality. This campaign is being called "8 Can't Wait."

Chief Blevins stated that the Town's Police Department's Policies and Procedures Manual was reviewed and revised in 2013, and he believes our Policies already cover the "8 Can't Wait" policies. Our policies give room for our officers to operate, but if the policies are violated the officer is on "thin ice." He added that his Department's use of force is very small. Chief Blevins discussed the following 8 procedure recommendations:

1 – Ban Chokeholds & Strangleholds – Chief Blevins explained that officers are charged with deciding whether or not to use deadly force in a situation. Sometimes officers have to pull people off of each other, which can require a hold around the neck. Chief Blevins stated that we have to be careful what we ban from our policies – it could cause an officer to be in violation of the policies when the action was actually warranted to deal with a certain situation.

2 – Require De-Escalation – Chief Blevins stated that offenders always decide how far an officer has to go to remedy a situation.

3-Require Warning Before Shooting

4 – Exhaust All Other Means Before Shooting – Chief Blevins stated that our officers are trained to use bean bags, Tasers, batons, pepper spray – they have to be certified to use each one.

5 – Duty to Intervene – This refers to incidents when an officer sees deadly force being used by other officers in violation of policy.

6-Ban Shooting at Moving Vehicles

7 – Require Use of Force Continuum – definition: A **use of force continuum** is a standard that provides law enforcement officers and civilians with guidelines as to how much force may be used against a resisting subject in a given situation

8 – Require Comprehensive Reporting – Chief Blevins stated that a letter is written to the him as Chief if excessive force is used by an officer. Also, all of our officers have body cameras. Chief Blevins commented that police officers as a general rule do not profile people, but they profile criminal activity.

Motion: (Larry Chapman/Barry Mitchell) to let the Board know our Police Department's Policies and Procedures are in compliance with the "8 Can't Wait" Campaign Procedures. Unanimously approved.

Ann commented that we feel very comfortable with our police leadership, and she thanked Chief Blevins for the report.

Discuss Creating Policy for Speed Humps:

Chief Blevins stated that we currently have 3 streets with speed humps –

- Sheldon Street (2 speed humps)

July 2, 2020 Public Safety Committee Meeting

- Hillcrest Street (2 speed humps)
- Eastview Street (2 speed humps)

Rebecca commented that the speed humps have been in place for several years and have become ineffective due to repaving of the streets.

Chief Blevins discussed the difference between a speed hump and a speed bump. Speed humps are typically 12 ft. to 14 ft. in width and 3" to 4" in elevation. Speed bumps are more narrow and smaller in size. Chief Blevins also mentioned a speed table, which typically measures 22 ft. in width and 3" to 4" in elevation. He commented that speed tables are typically not as abrupt as a speed hump.

The question was asked about the cost of a speed hump.

Rebecca commented that the cost of speed humps at one time was approximately \$2,500, but she did not have a current cost estimate.

Chief Blevins stated that in looking at whether or not to install a speed hump, the sight distance of the street has to be studied. Chief Blevins commented that in order to be effective, speed humps should be placed no closer together than 200 ft. and no farther apart than 500 ft.

Rebecca commented that some streets may need 3 speed humps instead of 2 to be effective in slowing down the traffic.

After some discussion, the Committee decided it would be best to have a policy in place for installing speed humps.

Motion: (Larry Chapman/Barry Mitchell) to request that Chief Blevins work with the Public Works Director to come up with a recommendation and policy for speed humps, with the residential approval/participation changed from the current 100% to 75% or 80%, and also make corrections to the current speed humps on the streets listed, with the Eastview Street speed humps being repositioned as needed. Unanimously approved.

Adjournment:

Motion: (Larry Chapman/Barry Mitchell) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk