

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

March 14, 2023

In Attendance:

Members Present: Commissioners Jim Engelman and Ann Smith

Members Absent: Commissioner Barry Mitchell

Others Present: Town Manager, Jonathan Greer, Chief of Police, Richard Blevins and Town Clerk, Tammy Swanson

Call to Order:

Chairman Jim Engelman called the meeting to order at approximately 3:00 pm.

Parking Complaints: Autumn Lane

Jonathan stated that he and Chief Blevins have been dealing with complaints from a resident, Chad Bumgarner at 147 Autumn Lane concerning parking in the neighborhood. According to Mr. Bumgarner, the neighbors that lives across the street from him park in the street and block his driveway. Jonathan stated that our Police Department has talked with the neighbors about the complaints, and they have been mailed a letter and given a copy of the Town Ordinance pertaining to parking.

Jonathan commented that instead of calling the Police Department when the parked vehicles are preventing him from getting out of his driveway, Mr. Bumgarner contacts him 3 days after the problem has occurred. The Police Officers have reported that when they ride through the neighborhood, they typically see cars parked just off the payment in the neighbors' yard. There was one incident this past weekend when a vehicle was parked with tires on the pavement, and the Police Department issued a warning ticket to the neighbors. Jonathan commented that after the warning ticket comes a citation if the parking problems persist. According to the neighbors, they have let Mr. Bumgarner know that they are willing to move any vehicle that is parked in his way. He just needs to make them aware of the problem.

Jonathan stated that Mr. Bumgarner has threatened to contact Raleigh and the WPCOG to get assistance with this problem. He has talked with Teresa Kinney, and reported that she told him that the neighbors could not park in a street right-of-way. Teresa indicated that this was not the information she gave Mr. Bumgarner. She suggested that he discuss the issue with the Police Department.

Ann asked why the vehicles are parked along the street in the neighbors' yard.

Jonathan stated that the neighbors have teenage sons that have vehicles and drive, and they sometimes have company over for cookouts and need extra parking space.

Chief Blevins stated that the Police Department tries to have the attitude of "live and let live." He commented that in a small town like Hudson, there are always gives and takes in neighborhoods – that is typically how people get along. Mr. Bumgarner has been told to contact the Police Department when there are issues with parking in the street, but he chooses to text and/or send pictures to Jonathan and Janet days after the problems have occurred. He commented that this makes addressing the problems very difficult for the Police Department.

Jonathan stated that Mr. Bumgarner has indicated that he plans to attend a Board of Commissioners' meeting to discuss the parking issues, and he just wanted this Committee to be aware of the situation.

New Handguns for Police Department:

Jonathan stated that Chief Blevins had planned to purchase new handguns for the Department in next year's budget. The quote for the new handguns was \$16,000. Jonathan stated that due to a huge savings in fuel costs this year, there are funds available in this year's budget to purchase the guns, and Chief Blevins has made a request to make the purchase.

Jim asked what happens to the used handguns.

Chief Blevins stated that the officers will be given an opportunity to purchase their guns first, which is what typically happens. If not purchased by the officers, the guns are turned back in to the department. Chief Blevins estimated that the sale of the old handguns would probably bring in \$4,000.

Motion: (Ann Smith/Jim Engelman) to approve the purchase of the handguns in this year's budget as requested, with the motion being presented to the full Board at the March 21, 2023 meeting. Unanimously approved.

New Response Trailer for Police Department:

Chief Blevins stated that after the George Floyd incident happened in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May of 2020, police departments across the country were put on alert for possible rioting. Our Department was asked to be on alert and ready by the City of Lenoir. Chief Blevins stated that the only problem with that was that we had no equipment to handle rioting. Since that time, we have purchased equipment, partially through Governor's Crime Commission Grants, for handling rioting, etc.; however, we have very limited space for storing this equipment. Chief Blevins stated that some of it is stored in one of the offices in the Police Department, and some of it is stored at the Public Works Facility. He stated that in order to have the equipment all stored in one place and ready to go if needed, he is purchasing an enclosed trailer to house the equipment. The Police Department received a \$4,000 grant from Walmart, and Granite Falls Trailer Sales just happened to have an enclosed trailer they were willing to sell for \$4,000. The trailer is 6ft. x 12ft. with a ramp door and a side door, which will meet our needs. Chief Blevins commented that the only expense over the grant amount would be the cost of the decals for the trailer.

Staffing Update:

Chief Blevins stated that the Police Department is still down 2 officers. He commented that other agencies in the area are in worse "staffing" shape than we are. Chief Blevins stated that the students graduating from the BLET programs from the area colleges have already been spoken for, and unfortunately, there are just not that many signing up for the program. He mentioned that there are events planned at the area colleges to try and encourage enrollment in the BLET programs.

Jonathan stated that 2 of our new officers are working through the apprenticeship program, which pays for ½ of their salaries and equipment for the first year. He added that there is the potential for one more officer in this program.

Chief Blevins commented that Officer Bryan Beebe will be going to Hudson Elementary School as the School Resource Officer.

Police Chief's Retirement:

Jonathan stated that he has received and signed Chief Blevins' official notification of retirement. Although we do not want Chief Blevins to leave, we understand that he has earned his retirement, and we are happy for him in that respect. His last day working will be November 22, 2023, which is our Annual Employee Thanksgiving Soup Day, before our Thanksgiving Holiday. With this in mind, we plan to make that a special lunch for Chief Blevins, with a time scheduled after the meal for people from the community and other agencies to come by and wish him well in his retirement. Jonathan stated that Chief Blevins' official retirement date is February 1, 2024.

Jonathan commented that considerations for Chief Blevins' replacement will begin in the coming months.

Adjournment:

Motion: (Ann Smith/Jim Engelman) to adjourn the meeting. Unanimously approved.

Tamra T. Swanson, Town Clerk