

SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

January 31, 2023

The Safety Committee of Chardon City Council met on Tuesday, January 31, 2023 at 2:00 PM in Council Chambers of the Chardon Municipal Center.

Heather Means, Chairman of Safety Committee presiding.

Members of Safety Committee present: David Lelko, Heather Means.

Others present: City Manager Randy Sharpe, Law Director Benjamin Chojnacki, Clerk of Council Amy Day, Police Chief Scott Niehus, Fire Chief Justin Geiss, Christopher Grau, Debbie Chuha, Tim Snyder, Amy Patterson, Sheriff Scott Hildenbrand, Lt. Brandon Reed.

Ms. Means called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to approve the minutes of the Safety Committee from November 1, 2022 as written. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

Regarding an update on the ODOT Systemic Safety Grant, City Manager Randy Sharpe, reported that the City's grant application has been submitted to ODOT for pedestrian safety for both the Square and High School locations that includes rectangular rapid flashing beacons, curb bump-outs, high visibility crosswalks and signage. He noted that ODOT has recommended that the project be moved up to coincide with the state route resurfacing. It is a 90%/10% for the project construction, which is estimated to be \$579,983. He noted that additional City costs would include project design and engineering which would bring the City's project cost to be \$115,150.10. The project is not in the capital improvement plan and if the City receives funding, the CIP will need to be revised.

Regarding the City Manager's recommendation to close the dispatch center, Mr. Sharpe stated that his decision to make this recommendation was not taken lightly, but as research was gathered, it became apparent that his recommendation would be to consolidate the dispatch center with the Sheriff's office. He reviewed some history about this decision and some of the considerations and research gathered (see memo attached), noting that equipment was the initial reason to begin the

analysis of keeping or disbanding the dispatch center.

Police Chief, Scott Niehus, reviewed staffing and equipment changes that would be necessary in order to provide proper coverage for the department.

Councilman Lelko asked what communities in Geauga County dispatch themselves.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that South Russell is the only other community to dispatch themselves.

Mr. Lelko asked why the City is not the backup anymore to the County.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that the City does not have the room or equipment to be the County's backup.

Ms. Means asked who is the County backup.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that they will work with the Lake County Sheriff's office.

Mr. Lelko asked if 911 calls can come to the City if the City chose to keep dispatch.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that it is up to the cell providers, but noted that the City would get calls from people outside the City.

Ms. Means asked what the transfer time is.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that it varies depending on the type of call it is.

Lt. Brandon Reed stated that EMS they keep processing and non-emergency calls they will transfer.

Mr. Lelko asked if the number of walk-in visitors is known.

Chief Niehus stated that the number of walk-in traffic is unknown, but there are people that come in after normal business hours.

Mr. Lelko asked if any consideration was given to making the proposed desk position 24/7.

Mr. Sharpe stated that there has been consideration given to making the position a 24/7 position. He added that a great majority of walk-ins come during the business hours. Accommodations for after-hours would still need to be ironed out.

Chief Niehus stated that other communities add phones in their lobbies that are answered by the dispatchers at the Sheriff's office.

Mr. Lelko asked when staff will finalize how all the details will be finalized.

Mr. Sharpe stated that once staff knows if Council wants to close the dispatch center.

Mr. Lelko stated that he would like answers to all of the questions before deciding whether or not to close the dispatch center.

Mr. Sharpe stated that there are various solutions to many of the questions, and staff would reach back out to the other communities to inquire how they have overcome the same obstacles.

Mr. Lelko asked about the holding cell.

Chief Niehus stated that an officer would need to be in the building if there was a person in the holding cell. And potentially there would be 2 officers in certain circumstances.

Mr. Lelko asked if the staffing issue could be resolved if money were not an obstacle.

Mr. Sharpe stated that yes, additional personnel could be hired so that there would be 2 full-time dispatchers working the same shift or at least for some cross-over time.

Chief Niehus stated that the department does what they can with part-time help, but that model is not working. Most part-time dispatchers have full-time jobs elsewhere and are not always available to work.

Mr. Lelko asked if he saw the City ever being the backup for the S.O.

Sheriff Hildenbrand stated that the City would need to purchase all new equipment and add an additional space. However, even if this happens, Geauga County would work towards Lake County being the backup because this is the most feasible.

Mr. Lelko asked if the current Records Clerk position would remain.

Mr. Sharpe stated that the current Records Clerk position would remain and an additional Records Clerk position would be added.

Ms. Means stated that a lot of time and effort has been put in this decision and its impact on the department and the

community, and Council would not be faced with this decision if it weren't for the equipment needs that could cost up to \$1 million. She added that updates to equipment will be an ongoing issue and the savings can be reinvested into the Police Department.

Ms. Means stated that she is not comfortable making a recommendation to Council about disbanding the dispatch center, but would rather take the issue to all of Council.

Mr. Lelko stated that the issue of consolidating the dispatch should go to all of Council. He wants all of their input and does not want to make a recommendation.

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to take the issue of consolidating the dispatch center to all of Council. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - none.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Chief Niehus reported that a tabletop exercise was held on January 28, 2023, facilitated by the County Emergency Management Department, to walk thru the City Emergency Operations Plan with the EOP core group. The exercise involved simulating a traffic crash with tanker truck and a spill of hazardous material. The group walked through what the City's response to the event would be and discussed the type of challenges they would be faced with.

Ms. Means asked if the tabletop would be useful to do on an annual basis.

Chief Niehus stated that it drives conversation and is very useful.

Mr. Sharpe added that an additional takeaway from the tabletop exercise is that a public information officer is needed for these types of circumstances.

Mayor Grau stated that there are updates that need made in the EOP which will be discussed with staff to see if there is a need to bring the issues back to the Safety Committee for discussion.

ADJOURN

Mr. Lelko moved and Ms. Means seconded to adjourn. Upon voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:57_PM.

Attest:

AMY DAY
Clerk of Council