

SAFETY COMMITTEE MINUTES NOVEMBER 16, 2021

The Safety Committee meeting was held on November 16, 2021, at North Royalton City Hall, 14600 State Road. The meeting was called to order at 6:15 p.m.

PRESENT: Committee Members: Chair Mike Wos, Vice Chair Joanne Krejci, Jeremy Dietrich; Council: Paul Marnecheck, Linda Barath, Jessica Fenos; Administration: Mayor Larry Antoskiewicz, Fire Chief Robert Chegan, Police Chief Keith Tarase, Interim Finance Director Vern Blaze, Law Director Thomas Kelly; Other: Rick Lombardo, John Nickell, Jenny Esarey, Marty Toukonen.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of October 19, 2021 Safety Committee minutes. Moved by Mr. Wos, seconded by Ms. Krejci. Vote: Yeas; 3 Nays: 0 **Motion carried.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. COVID-19 Local Response

Chief Chegan briefed that everything remained the same with no change since the last meeting. The numbers have remained steady.

2. Police & Safety Report

Chief Tarase reported on the statistics for the month of October which included the following: 6 deer accidents, 5 hit skips, 35 non-injury accidents, 5 accidents on private property, 63 physical arrests, 45 speeding tickets, and 15 death complaints. He reported the following for deer hunting: 91 harvested deer, which consisted of 73 doe and 18 bucks. Ms. Barath inquired about the number of deer per ward. Chief Tarase shared the numbers per ward as follows:

Ward 1 = 41 deer, Ward 2 = 7, Ward 3 = 3, Ward 4 = 10, Ward 5 = 10, and Ward 6 = 20.

Chief Tarase explained that they completed the acceptance of lateral transfers. They are currently in review, in which there are roughly two officers in the preliminary stages. They have set up new Civil Service testing procedures. Rather than in-person testing, it is done online with the national testing. Originally, there was a test scheduled on November 10th, in which there were 12 applicants. However, that was postponed and moved to the online testing. During one week, 31 have signed up and submitted their scores. An additional 3 applicants are scheduled to take it before the end of the month. That will run until January 17th, at which time they would put together a Civil Service list.

Mr. Wos questioned where the candidates for laterals tend to be coming from. Chief Tarase indicated that there was a total of 9 applications, with the majority being from Cleveland. Also, they had another suburb and some from the hospital systems. Mr. Dietrich inquired about an update on the current number of police officers. Chief Tarase indicated there were 35 officers until Friday; with expected retirements. Mr. Dietrich asked what number the Chief would be comfortable in getting back to and how many he was looking to bring in. Chief Tarase mentioned that they could go up to 40, however, they have been operating with roughly 35 officers for the last few years. Chief Tarase noted that he was not trying to get to 40. Currently, he is looking to keep pace, perhaps improving by one or two; however, that depends on Council. There is one retiring this week on Friday, with the possibility of a couple more in the first quarter of next year. Mayor Antoskiewicz felt that two or three more officers would get us back to where we started; due to all of the retirements and also, lack of candidates. He went on to say that the biggest challenge has been replacing those that have retired. Hopefully with the changes on testing, there would be an increased number of candidates; to help get the numbers back up, and with the lateral transfers.

Mr. Dietrich commented that although it may not be affordable, he felt that we should have roughly, over 50 officers with the size of the City. He wanted to know what number would be the goal. Mayor Antoskiewicz

reiterated that we are just trying to get back up to where we were in number. He felt that we have not had enough candidates, which was why lateral transfers have been implemented. It was his hope that it would be successful.

Mr. Marnecheck wanted to know more on the process of lateral transfers when it comes to evaluating those candidates. Chief Tarase explained that once applications are submitted, they go through an oral interview with five or six officers; different ranks. It entails the same type of oral interview board that the Civil Service hires go through. They go through and decide whether they may be a good fit for the department. At that point, they give their recommendations to Chief Tarase. Therefore, out of those nine that were received, they picked 4 possible candidates, in which those make the list; these are not ranked. The Chief went on to say that they can pull anywhere off of the list of the 4. Mr. Marnecheck asked if that initial interview helps narrow it down and Chief Tarase concurred. Mr. Dietrich pointed out that there is an age cut off for lateral transfers, which is 35 years of age. Chief Tarase agreed; which is the same as the regular hires.

3. Traffic Lights Discussion

- **Strongsville/North Royalton border – W. 130th Street**

Mr. Jordan advised that the Police Department manages the contract with the traffic portion, however, when improvements are made, we typically go to an outside engineering company. He commented on York and Albion Road, in which part of those issues existed before Covid. He made mention of Sprague Road, whereas the traffic patterns have changed; he felt this would be a temporary problem. A traffic engineer took a look and recommended timing changes while using the current apparatus. They acknowledged that during Covid the traffic counts were different. He went on to say that the school is now closed, therefore, it was likely that at that intersection, the traffic has changed, as well as Sprague. We could have a traffic engineer look at the timing and recommend timing changes. We can pass it along to the Police Department for traffic changes. Mr. Jordan stated if we desire more than that, he could ask the company if they recommend making further improvements; changing signal, adding turn signal light, and/or permanent improvements to the actual signal. The last and most expensive option would be putting in a right of way improvement, which would require a traffic study to do that on a state route. He was aware there are very specific issues at that intersection. He wanted to know if we would desire to have an engineer look at the time changes at this point, or take it a step further.

Mayor Antoskiewicz reiterated that we have worked on readjusting the timing of it again to see whether that will help. With Sprague Road being a two-year project, he is aware that the traffic has again changed. He felt it is hard to get a fair glimpse of what is going on; however, he recognizes that there is problem. He does not know how it is going to work with changing some of the timing, but hoped it can make traffic flow better. He wondered if Council may want to consider moving forward with some type of traffic study, as to whether we change that whole signal system or not; which there would be a cost to upgrade that.

Chief Tarase explained that they put a traffic trailer there last week with the speed signs, so that they could count traffic; east bound on Albion Road. They are trying to see how much the traffic count has gone up with the construction on Sprague Road. They also had someone look at the timing on the lights. As a result, York Road, north and south bound, the signals were a minimum of 35 seconds, which went out to 67 seconds; for the light to cycle. As for Albion, east and west bound, that was a minimum 15 seconds and a maximum of 27 seconds. He continued that if a vehicle going east bound on Albion wanted to turn north onto Sprague, that it holds up all of traffic. He shared that officer Kimmel had noticed that people were sitting there for 3 light cycles. Therefore, we changed the timing on the lights. York Road will remain 35-67 seconds. Albion was changed, whereas they expanded the 27 seconds maximum to 40 seconds. He explained that they put it back onto the loops; so as long as there is traffic going over those loops within 4 seconds, it will run the counts out to the maximum amount of time. He continued that it is sensing the cars on the loops on Albion and would change the light cycle faster; therefore, moving traffic out of there faster. That is what was done for the timing on the lights for now.

Ms. Krejci stated that intersection has been a concern for a lot of people for a long time. She would support trying to do more than just another study, unless the Chief's advice would be that we see what happens with the timing changes. Or perhaps it is a good time to do a study because you could see if it has been effective. Chief Tarase felt that we could probably look and see what the traffic counts are first; to get an idea. If we want to change the light, all of the equipment there would have to be changed; the box cannot handle an upgraded light. Mr. Jordan mentioned that in terms of a study, to spend the kind of money that would be needed to improve the apparatus, one would typically hire an engineer to look at it.

Ms. Fenos expressed that we have to do something for sure. At some point we are going to be doing the wastewater upgrade and Abbey Road is going to be a problem. She felt that it would always be an issue at that intersection and we should at least change the timing. As discussion ensued, she felt that something needs to happen. She does not think waiting on this is a good idea; it is not going to improve.

Mr. Dietrich asked if that intersection ever had a study done on it, and if so, when does it expire. Mr. Jordan conveyed that it did. He went on to say that it was a very generalized study that we received through NOACA, which was free; we do pay into NOACA. Mr. Dietrich questioned if that did not satisfy the state's requirement. Mr. Jordan indicated that it identified issues at the intersection, and it would have to be taken up to another level of engineering study in order to get permission to make any improvements. However, the state wants to make sure that if changes are made at that intersection, that it comports to state requirements. Mr. Dietrich asked if that was due to York Road. Mr. Jordan concurred. He reiterated what Chief Tarase shared, that the timing changes were just made within the last week. He brought up traffic counts before Sprague Road started and what they were after, whereas that smaller amount is what they will see on a more continuous basis; which is what the traffic signal should be able to handle. Mr. Dietrich raised question as to the cost to do a study; one that would in fact, satisfy the state's requirement as needed. Mr. Jordan was not certain. His understanding was that all engineering studies are roughly 10 % of what the overall improvement costs. Mr. Dietrich expressed that for Council to be able to make a decision, they need an idea of what it would cost. If that is a requirement regardless of what is done, then the study has to be done. He encouraged Mr. Jordan in getting a better estimate of the cost for that specific intersection, so that all can know the approximate cost to do such a study.

Chief Tarase explained that doing the traffic count would also get a better idea on the hours that the traffic increases. Once they obtain that, he would have it run for a week; adjustments can be made to the timing on those hours also. Mr. Jordan concurred that they adjusted it and are still looking at it. They can adjust it again with the technology that they have, and meanwhile, Mr. Jordan could get an estimate on what it would cost on a study basis.

Mr. Wos pointed out one of the other intersections, Akins and Ridge Road; which he just noticed an accident on the way in. It is a troublesome intersection because people tend to run the stop on Akins and get t-boned by people that do not have to stop on Ridge Road. He was not sure of further accidents. Chief Tarase noted he was not aware of any. He did not know the cause of that accident. Mr. Wos stated that this is definitely an issue in Ward 6.

KEEP ON AGENDA

NEW BUSINESS

1. Flock Safety

Chief Tarase advised that they are looking to add some license plate readers within the City; toward the apartments on the west end of Route 82, in which there have been a number of thefts in that area. He has started looking into different options for license plate readers. Mr. Rick Lombardo of Flock Safety is here tonight to share a presentation on this type of security system for the City; which helps Police in getting proactive alerts.

SEE ATTACHED REPORT.

Mr. Lombardo pointed out that Law Enforcement were the only ones able to access the information that is collected, and for 30 days. Mr. Marnecheck asked if photos are able to be saved from that data. Mr. Lombardo indicated yes, for individual cases. Mr. Marnecheck asked if a Police Department could save a photo and have access to it past the 30 days. Chief Tarase concurred, stating that Flock Safety does not save it on their server; there are privacy concerns. Mr. Marnecheck asked if the cameras are located on poles, in which they are, Mr. Lombardo explained. Mr. Marnecheck wanted to know if it captures both front and rear license plates. Mr. Lombardo indicated that it can, however, it is designed to capture the back. Discussion ensued regarding numbers of cameras in municipalities and those that have them; they are a great asset.

Chief Tarase felt that this would help the efficiency greatly for the North Royalton Police Department, and in solving crimes. He would suggest entrances to the City as a place to begin and the most important areas. He felt that roughly 26 cameras total would be a good number, in response to Mr. Dietrich, whom was impressed and supported the idea. One high profile example was given, whereas a juvenile had been rescued by police and pulled to safety after using the Flock Safety System; it helped catch the suspects. This would entail a two-year contract.

Mayor Antoskiewicz appreciated all of the information. Mr. Dietrich supported pursuing this idea. Mr. Fenos questioned what the next step would be. The Mayor stated that if Council is in favor of looking into it, he would meet with the Chief and see how many cameras would be needed; then present to Council. Mr. Dietrich was also impressed with the cost for such technology if it helps the officers to do their job; he fully supported it. Ms. Barath asked what areas was the Chief thinking of covering. Chief Tarase stated that it would be reviewed and comparisons would be made to surrounding areas.

Mr. Kelly added another great point, that from his perspective, this provides evidence in a way that would allow prosecutors to do their job more effectively. It can serve purposes beyond capturing; it is also a tool for prosecution. Council supported this idea. Mayor Antoskiewicz was in agreeance.

2. House Bill 172

Mr. Wos had added this to the agenda. He summarized that Ohio passed this, which allows adults to use consumer grade fireworks on private property on certain holidays. He noted that our current ordinance does not permit fireworks in the City. He wanted to know how this affects us. Mr. Kelly conveyed that it affects us by virtue of creating a controversy which all would like to have avoided. It places every City Council with a charter in the position of having to make determinations; even the non-charter cities are going to have the same problem. He continued that the language affords the municipalities the option of either banning the use and possession of fireworks all together, or following state law, or modifying it. He could not say for certain what the perimeters were yet. However, it is going to be a contentious issue for those people who are adamantly in favor of it and for those opposed to it. He stated that we are going to have to take input from all sides, hear what the Police have to say, also the public, and come to a decision. He concluded that the options are; follow state law, ban them, or find some middle ground.

LEAVE ON AGENDA.

3. High School / Middle School Crosswalk

Chief Tarase spoke to the school resource officer who was initially contacted by the residents. This had to do with a child having to walk from their street down to the light, to cross, and then walk back. He felt that it does not seem to be an issue other than this one complaint received. The student did not want to walk down to the light and walk back. Looking at where the cross walk is at the light, that is the best place for it, the Chief stated. If it were to be moved up to where the street is, there is no way for cars to stop that are going through that school zone; just for one or two individuals to walk. There is no traffic control device that would help their safety. In conclusion, he determined that walking a couple hundred feet was okay in this instance.

TAKE OFF AGENDA

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Mr. Vos seconded by Mr. Dietrich **to adjourn the November 16, 2021 meeting.** Yeas: 3 Nays: 0.
Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:28 p.m.

11-08-2021

October Stats

ACCIDENTS:

FATAL	0
DEER	6
HIT SKIP	5
INJURY	0
NON INJURY	35
PRIVATE PROPERTY	5
PHYSICAL ARRESTS:	63
SPEEDING TICKETS:	45
THEFT COMPLAINTS: (includes attempts)	15