

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
FEBRUARY 1, 2022 AT 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CAUCUS ROOM & VIA ZOOM**

Present: Chairperson Tom Narduzzi
 Vice Mayor Dave Grendel
 Councilperson Dale Veverka

Others Present: Councilperson John DiGeronimo (arrived at 4:25 p.m.)
 Councilperson Anthony Togliatti
 Councilperson Jim Trakas
 Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
 Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
 Finance Director Vern Blaze
 Police Chief Robert Butler
 Fire Chief Steve Rega
 Officer Waidley

Chairperson Tom Narduzzi called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Chairperson Narduzzi said this is the first one of the year. Thanks everybody for coming for everyone who is here, and for those out there in TV land. Jim, I think you are the only one.

It's a long agenda, but I think we can get through it relatively quickly because Chief Butler is always prepared, and he's going to start off with Police Manpower Update.

Police Chief Butler said thank you so much. I won't even stand to make this like a lecture presentation.

So, the shift breakdown for 2021 to 2022 have seen an increase, a great bump. I will start off by saying in 2021 the City of the Independence and the Mayor, the Safety Director, made a huge commitment to Independence Police Department. We hired 7 new officers throughout the year of 2021 which at the last meeting I showed you guys 10 or 12 years in the past. It was the highest increase of officers that we have hired in one year that I have seen in decades. So, we got really lucky with that. This puts us on course to line up better how I was hoping things to play out would be. We promoted the Sergeants to Lieutenants, which means we have these open Sergeant positions. We are about to give a test very soon. You can see that the number below the 7, that was the number we were hoping for as a goal. This adds extra service. This adds extra manpower to the road, and we have additional supervision for the younger officers, that clear direction.

I am very honored that in the last meeting I was at with City Council and the Mayor, it was very complimentary of how things have been going for the last 3 months. We have been seeing lights.

We have been seeing the officers doing the speed details. This is because of that manpower, and where the setup is for the shifts. We have the Lieutenants and eventually will have the Sergeants that are going to tell those officers the clear needs that we want to have accomplished by the staff.

In 2021 we had Wilson and Smagola in the Detective Bureau, and we have added one. Andrew March is starting actually on February 14th. We delayed that one week, and this begins succession planning. Wilson and Smagola are both slated to retire within the next 2 to 3 years. I stated in the last Safety Committee meeting, we have to look forward. We can't just react as things happen. So, as these guys retire, we have somebody that's fully trained. There is no break in service. The residents still maintain the highest level of professionalism from us, and there is none of that learning curve as we lose one and gain a new one. He will be fully trained and ready to go when that change comes.

Borowy and Repicky are still School Resource Officers. I will talk about Mr. Repicky in a second, and we still have our Task Force Officers. There are no changes there.

So department breakdown, this is just the highlights of what I kind of talked about. The Lieutenant positions are complete. We promoted the 3 that we needed. We now have a Lieutenant per shift.

A Sergeants test will be coming. Due to how the test is given, and the time that we have to give them due to Civil Service and some of the other aspects of that scheduling, we will most likely not be able to fill those positions until sometime around July. This is just based on the testing and how things go. This is of no fault of the City in any kind.

Currently, we have 22 road patrolmen, 3 will be promoted to Sergeant which will leave us at 19. The goal, as I stated in the last Safety Committee, was 7. We have one retirement in January 2023. The original proposal from the last meeting had the department at about 38, which means the outlook potentially, this is the goal of the year, not the necessity, is that we will most likely will be looking to hire 3 patrolmen sometime throughout the year closer to the end of the year, and those 3 Sergeants being promoted. This is already incorporated in my budget, and will come underneath what I was asking for at the beginning of the year.

The goal is not to have any diminished service to our public. We need the highest level of professional service which means boots on the ground. We need the officers to be able to work and be trained and ready to go, and this is how we are preparing for that outlook.

I want to announce at this meeting that we formed a business liaison officer. This is very exciting, something I am very proud of. I talked to the Mayor about this before, and this was the way I wanted to roll this out. Currently, we are using an SRO on his days off, when there's no school, there's a snow day, there's a long break, there's spring break. The School Resource Officer will become a business liaison. He goes to our businesses, no matter how large or how small. He brings this form with him. The form gets the owner's information, phone numbers, managers, keyholders. Do they have cameras? Do they have alarm systems? It provides

essential information for our officers to have. This information is then uploaded into our computers so that the officers have fresh, current information for every business so there's no confusion. Further, if they have any issues, concerns, special attention, they funnel this through the School Resource Officer. The businesses of Independence have somebody they can rely on and speak any concerns that they have. That officer then can rely it to the proper channels and get special attentions done and anything else of that capacity.

I am going to look down the line, there is training for this through the State which would allow that officer to be trained to help setup cameras. So, let's say for example there's a brand new business coming into town like Saucy Brew Works or something like that, and they are interested in cameras in their parking lot, or they are interested in cameras internally. This officer would be trained to help them position the cameras for maximized levels of safety. It's a resource that many other cities do not have, and the few other Chiefs that I talked to kind of got a little jealous of this that we have this resource.

This all encompasses into our manpower. Having manpower boots on the ground is important. For that I brought with us today Officer Waidley. Officer Waidley is a canine officer with us. He's done some really remarkable things recently, and I felt it would be really important for him to talk about why manpower is important for somebody on the road level. So, I am going to turn it over to Officer Waidley and get out of the way.

Officer Waidley said I am Patrolman Waidley. I have been with the City for about 8 years, and this is my partner Rambo who is absolutely making a mess over here.

One of the incidents that we had that the Chief wanted me to talk about was we just had an aggravated robbery at the Sunoco gas station on Rockside Road at the beginning of December. It was right around closing time, 11:30 at night. The clerk went out to take out the trash where he was met in the parking lot by a male with a gun and told to go back inside to the gas station, and at that point he took about \$200 cash and over \$2,500 in cigarettes, lottery tickets, the usual things like that. That day I was working day shift. I came in, and we were debriefed on the incident. They didn't have a suspect. They got a great make and model of the vehicle. It had some pretty unique identifiers on it from our Flock system that we have. It's a great investigative tool for us, and we were able to locate that vehicle at one of our hotels. The vehicle was towed that night when we could have an arrest. Because of the manpower we had that day with 5 people working, I was able to go to that hotel to interview clerks, housekeepers, other guests with a photo of a couple of suspects. Hey, have you seen this guy? Oh yeah, I have seen this guy. I asked if he was with anybody, and we knew automatically that our person of interest we were going to talk to. At that point, I set up some surveillance in the parking lot. Since we towed the car, I saw the male kind of walk out and did one of these, where's my car? If you had your car stolen, and there was a Police Officer sitting right there, wouldn't you walk up to him and say hey I think my car got stolen. He looked up, he saw me and went back into the hotel. I followed him and said hey excuse me, can I talk to you for a second? Do you know what this is about? He said I don't think so. So, in under 12 hours we were able to get our suspect, recover the money, recover the cigarettes.

Mayor Kurtz asked where was Rambo during this discussion with him?

Officer Waidley stated I had my thumb on the popper ready to roll in case he tried to run or wanted to fight. The conversation did take place in the parking lot.

Jim Riley asked if Rambo was still in the car?

Officer Waidley said he was in the car ready.

Chairman Narduzzi asked what's the popper?

Officer Waidley said the popper, up to about 50 yards, I will pop the door, and I don't have to open it, and he will come right to me. Sometimes at night, he will see me over in the parking lot, and what I will do is I will park my car. I will take that toy that he seems so in love, and I will go where he can't find me. I will hide behind a dumpster or trash can, and I will leave my car in the parking lot and hit that door button to test out see how long the range is. He will come find me. He comes right to my side, whether I needed to act on a threat. Or he's there for kind of interrogation purposes.

Finance Director Blaze said it would be pretty cool to see him help himself to the hotel lobby too.

Officer Waidley said the funny thing is those doors are motion, so he has before.

The first picture is everything that we recovered. Everything was in the trunk of the vehicle. The cash, we recovered every single cent taken from the register, all the cartons of cigarettes, everything he was wearing. So, the manpower we have here with 5 people working, we were able to set up surveillance. So, within 12 hours to catch that robbery suspect, we got really lucky.

The second thing, one of the other pictures in there is at the Red Roof Inn. We had manpower. We had a suspicious vehicle up there. It was given to us by one of our (inaudible). With these hotels, you never when people leave. They could be there for illegal reasons. We did a traffic stop on the car. I ran the dog around, and we were able to recover \$55,000 in cash and a kilo of heroin.

Jim Riley asked how much is a kilo worth on the street?

Chief Butler said a lot.

Officer Waidley said and what we did miss and Councilperson Walchanowicz I sent you the email of the seizure. They were able to flip these people.

Chairman Narduzzi asked so what happens with the cash?

Police Chief Butler said so the Task Force helps that out. That's a longer discussion on how our relationship is with the Task Force and stuff like that. It's a main thing, so we get a significant percentage of it because we did a majority of the legwork, but because we are part of the Task Force and all the other cities are part of the Task Force, we have to distribute those funds. We get a portion, we get the largest portion, but we do not get all that money as opposed to Rambo and our other dog, Argo. If Waidley makes a stop himself, he gets the money, and it's just it's 100% ours, but it would be up to the court to seize that money. They are usually pretty good about that.

Officer Waidley said the fact that it was found with a kilo of heroin in a bag that was in the trunk, and these people were already suspected of it.

Police Chief Butler said a kilo is about \$140,000.

Officer Waidley said so we got one kilo which you can see in that picture, and that actually led to 14 kilos of methamphetamine, one kilo of cocaine and another kilo of heroin.

This was another traffic stop that took place out of the City. There's a good chance that all these drugs came through our City.

Jim Riley said you are talking close to \$1,000,000.

Officer Waidley said at the end of the day when the DEA did the whole thing, I believe it was over \$3,000,000.

Chairman Narduzzi asked was that on 21?

Officer Waidley said the traffic stop that I initiated was on Rockside and 21 right by the (inaudible). It was a rental vehicle, a mother and daughter. The other stop happened a little bit further down I-77. I think the Troopers were the ones that stopped her. That's just an example of the stuff we do when we have the manpower. There is a lot of stuff in those hotels, and the right investigation and the bodies to work it.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked are there certain hotels that they prefer?

Officer Waidley said all of our hotels, it doesn't matter, downtown Cleveland, Independence, Middleburg, Richfield.

Police Chief Butler said any hotel could have it. There are some hotels that really attract different parties that we would run into more often. You see those in the weekly updates. You see the reoccurring names. So, there are some hotels that do not have the same standards, but first and foremost I want to compliment Officer Waidley in front of everyone here today for his exceptional work. That was why we wanted him to come today to showcase not only our amazing officers, our professional officers, but with the resources that he had, he went and he proactively took the time to find this criminal within 12 hours. So, I wanted him here today so

that all of City Council could see the quality of our officers, and we really appreciate what you do.

Everyone began to applaud.

Several people began speaking at once.

Officer Waidley said you can train a dog to detect anything. There's dogs that can detect cell phones, computers. You can use them to find cell phones in cars.

Mayor Kurtz said so if you are hiding in one of these buildings somewhere, he will find you.

Officer Waidley said absolutely, no question. If you are behind a locked door that he can't see you, he will bark and dig to let me know.

Police Chief Butler said and I will state that the resolution to that Sunoco story, all the items and money were returned to our business before the end of that day, and that was his inventory of cigarettes I believe as well. He had that back that day.

Officer Waidley said it was his most popular cigarettes.

Police Chief Butler said, and I understand we are talking cigarettes, but at the day, it's a business that operates here, and we are getting his items back to him.

Police Chief Butler said thank you Officer Waidley. You and Rambo are good to go.

Officer Waidley and Rambo left the meeting.

Police Chief Butler said moving on, I am almost done. I want to make sure I don't take up all of our time, and Chief Rega has plenty of time to talk today.

Our jailer, I am very excited about this, and I just want to state that we all talked after the last meeting. Some including Chairman Narduzzi and Councilperson Walchanowicz, the Mayor, they went back and saw our jail. They saw our needs. A night jailer was something we really did need, and the officers, almost everyone I spoke to, that was their Number 1 issue they wanted to do.

So, we finished the interviews, and we have signed an offer letter for a jailer, a night jailer to work 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Previously, we had a jailer just working Tuesday and Wednesday nights part-time. This person was being paid between \$16,000 and \$17,000 a year. We were not getting a return on that. I lined up when we were getting the most population in our jails, what resources we were using here. We did try every avenue we could to reach out to this individual and have them work with us. He didn't want to work with us, didn't want to work weekends. We need Friday and Saturday nights, and this new jailer is going to really help us out. In fact currently this month, we had a weekend where we had a

prisoner in jail for the entire weekend, which means we were paying an officer around \$42.00 an hour to sit there and watch a person in jail. We lose the manpower on the road. You heard from Lieutenant Murphy at the last Safety Committee meeting when sometimes when there were 3 and 4 guys, they were concerned about being proactive. They didn't want to put somebody in jail and pull somebody else off the road. This mitigates that. When an officer arrests somebody, they can bring them in and get right back on the road. This jailer books them in. The jailer watches them. It helps for liability sake for the City. There will be other tasks. I am very much about, we just don't sit. If there's nobody in jail on Wednesday night, this person is going to be cleaning up our range. There will be other tasks that they have agreed to do that are going to help the department. It's about the team, and the officers are excited about this. So, it's very important for my plan. If anybody has any questions or concerns, I do hope you raise those at the end of this, but my goal is in the next few weeks, this person will be working. The offer letter has been signed, and we thank the Safety Director for that.

Training, Lieutenant Martin has been announced as the head of internal training. We, the City of Independence, are hosting 4 national training classes in Independence. We are hosting them at our Civic Center. We get 2 free seats per class. This saves us just this year a little over \$1,200 in training costs. That's not counting hotel or travel or food. We are hosting it in our City. I have made mandatory that every officer in our department will participate in intervention training within the next 3 years. We already have 3 signed up, and one officer completed it last week. He will be at the next Safety Committee meeting to talk about what that is. This is the highest level of mental health training that officers can receive currently in law enforcement. It is a 40 hour intensive class that goes through many different aspects of how to deal with people in mental health crisis. How to help them and get the resources that they need. So, every one of our officers will be having that pinned on their vest to show that we are committed to mental health training, it helps saves lives and provides good proper service for everyone in need. Much, much more training to come. I don't want to go through all of it, I will leave you thirsty for more.

Equipment and facility, the last few things. New pants have been ordered. I stated that I am big on uniformity. Some of the pants are already getting sent out to officers. The new vests have been fitted and ordered for all road officers. The road comes first in my eyes, and after that Sergeants and Lieutenants, Chiefs will get their vests. I am trying to spread this out. Every 5 years vests come to their expiration dates, so I need to be financially responsible in this. The vests that they currently have are not expired. So, we are fitting the officers that will be doing the most work in those with the brand new vests first.

The 3 radar units were ordered back in December, and there have been shipping delays. I am hoping to get those in February.

I am also excited to announce that we have a brand new evidence processing room. Before I got here, those lockers in those pictures were in the room where our officers ate which would mean that if an officer got evidence such as heroin or fentanyl, they were processing it in the room where they ate. This is a separate room that has all of the tools and resources that they need to work independently. A way to do everything that they can free of distraction and concentrate on the evidence to make sure everyone is safe.

Finally, I know everyone mentioned in the last meeting that I was at on Saturday about the new facility. Our facility is over 40 years old. I want you to know that I am being very proactive. I am meeting with many different departments. I met with Rocky River, and I toured their new facility and took pictures. I have a meeting with other facilities that are not brand new, but I am going to be meeting with every brand new, Mayfield Village, anyone that has a new department. I want us to gain everyone's knowledge, what succeeded, what didn't succeed. So, we make a very logical determination together, if that's the right step for the City of Independence. I am doing my due diligence, and that is not something that is off my radar.

So, that is the Police Department's report, and I am happy to answer any questions and bring back those that are on the meeting. We have gained some other people in the meeting as well. If anybody has any questions, comments or concerns, I am happy to answer those.

Chairman Narduzzi said so first of all, thanks Chief Butler. We met in November, and a lot of these things we had slated to happen, and 3 months later they happened. So, kudos to you. It seems like you are a man of your word, and you are taking care of business. So, that's great to see. I applaud you for that sir.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked do you think that the person has signed on as far as the night jailer?

Police Chief Butler said yes sir. So, we have an individual that has been identified. He has signed his offer letter, and it has been presented to him today. There will be the drug test and then a start date.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and if everything goes well, he will start?

Police Chief Butler said he will start in the next few weeks, before the end of February.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked is that a resident or non-resident?

Police Chief Butler said it is a non-resident. The jailer situation, it's not the easiest job to fill. I will state that it's not attractive to a lot of people. You also have to remember that this is a night-time only position that they will be working every Friday and Saturday night. We did have some applicants, but many of which were not interested in really communicating. They applied to apply, maybe to show that they were applying for jobs. Those that did apply, we had some good interviews and none were residents.

Chairman Narduzzi asked so is there such a thing as a Minute Man type deal for this in case he falls ill, has a wedding to go to or something on a Friday or Saturday night.

Finance Director Blaze said an employee could have sick days, vacation days, etc.

Police Chief Butler said the next look will eventually be kind of what I wanted our old jailer to do. So having two full-timers are very important for us, consistency and knowing we are getting the best quality officer consistently, the jailer. A part-timer that's only on call where if we need

him or her because this person has called off or because we have somebody in jail on a Sunday or Monday night that we don't want to watch, we can look at that in our next step as a part-timer that only comes in when we need them to work, but you have to remember that diminishes our pool of candidates. That's not something that a lot of people, you are not going to get the highest quality at the end of the day. No offense if the person is watching. Some of the people who did apply, one of them could be somebody who could do it, but you are only getting a part-time helper. How much training, and stuff like that. We are going to be doing a good investment on this jailer because we want to trust that we get the best quality person. This person is going to be riding with officers. They are going to be helping pick up warrants for us, so this is something that we want to be able to trust that person. We currently have a great jailer. Jeff Mudra is the Jail Manager. He is fantastic. He rides with our officers. We trust him. That is what you get with a full-time employee. Part-time and full-time is sometimes a difficult thing to get. The last part-timer we had, I did not feel was giving us the bang for our buck.

Finance Director Blaze said so Jeff stays on.

Police Chief Butler said he's the daytime. This is a night-time jailer. The day-time jailer sets up court arraignments. They get the people out of jail for us as he comes in. So, we need one in the day to get them to court so they get video arraignment, walk them over to Mayor's court if we get to this point. I know they are familiar with Jeff doing that. The night jailer is keeping our officers on the road. That was the problem. The day guy was accomplishing his tasks. We had no one at night except for officers, and we have to legally check on a prisoner every hour. If we are not checking on them every hour, we could be held liable if something happens to such and such individual. If the officers get caught up in a blizzard, they get caught up on accidents, they can't necessarily pull themselves off the road and go check on that prisoner or we are a half an hour late, that is something we don't want to discuss how much that would cost the City of Independence.

Councilperson Veverka asked do we only jail males?

Police Chief Butler said no, we jail females as well, if they break the law.

Finance Director Blaze said we are an equal opportunity jail.

Police Chief Butler said we have a female wing and a male wing. They are separated. Our jails are to the highest State standards.

Finance Director Blaze asked how many days?

Police Chief Butler we are a 12 day jail facility.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked what do they do with the transgender now?

Police Chief Butler said that's a long discussion, but our jailers are trained. They go to training specifically for that, and we do have cells that can get them to an area they are most comfortable.

Chairman Narduzzi asked so I have one more question. On the shift breakdown, the first line, there are still only 6.

Police Chief Butler said no, as stated over time throughout this year, the goal being 3 that would fill that hole. That is the only thing that we are a little bit down. You have to also remember that I just added Andrew March to the Detective Bureau for succession planning, so that did take away one spot from the road. They are both equally important. I do not feel that we will have diminished service anywhere in the foreseeable future based on where we are at right now.

Mayor Kurtz said Chief take a second to explain to the new Council how you value and prioritize training and how you feel when we have a discussion about the full breath of all the training opportunities and advancement opportunities.

Police Chief Butler said absolutely sir. The training is the backbone of any Police Department in my eyes. I feel this is a valuable way to retain officers within the department. Not only are we going to be hosting a vast majority of training which cuts our costs, but it will allow officers to find their niche, something they want to do and succeed at. The goal will be to get a traffic crash investigator on every shift. This is not only great for the City of Independence, unique, no other department does this; but it gives a little bit of a carrot to the officers to keep them motivated, keep them out there wanting to do their job and make us unique from other departments. A lot of departments, you get there, if you get promoted great, if not do your job, be quiet and get back to the grind. I think we can find value in our officers. We can find those that want to teach. We can find those that want to be traffic investigators. We can find those that want to be DRE's. This does not cost anything extra for the City to be able to do, it just takes a Chief and a person who is in charge of training the extra steps to get there. I want to do that. I want to constantly encourage our guys and give them new goals and expectations to reach for. We do not want anybody to fall by the wayside. We don't want anybody to feel like there's nowhere for them to go. They want to go lateral, they want to go somewhere else. Well let me tell you, the grass isn't going to be greener anywhere else because we are going to be providing you the training, the skills and the focus that the officers want to grow.

I understand that a lot of our Lieutenants are, they have a lot of years left. Sergeants will potentially have a lot of years left, but there's other avenues to get those officers motivated to grow. Maybe they don't want to be a Sergeant, a Sergeant is not for everybody, but let me tell you, maybe you want to be a canine officer. You want to focus on narcotics. You want to focus on this.

Chairman Narduzzi said I asked the Chief when we met about the officers on the road, saying look once we get this established, we are going to be established for quite sometime. What happens to these patrolmen, they become stagnant? He said well we are going to find stuff for them to do to keep them motivated.

Police Chief Butler said as cheesy as it sounds, I look at the shift as a team. We are a team. We have to complement each other. Not every single person is going to be the best traffic stop guy. Not everyone is going to be the best community outreach guy, but if we have skills on every

shift, and we can divide those up amongst the guys and motivate them. Well, I love community service, let's get you some training in that. I love doing this, I am going to get you trained in that. Now you are the key person on that shift. You might not always be working, but when the team is together, it's functioning and the pistons are working cohesively.

Mayor Kurtz said the Chief is pretty modest, but he is a DRE, could you explain what that is and how you can help others grow in that position.

Police Chief Butler said I am a drug recognition expert. There are only about 200 of us in the State. So, officers are trained in standardized field sobriety test, that is finding out if somebody is drinking. So, we can determine hey you are impaired. Not sure on what, it looks like it's on alcohol, you are going to come back to jail. When that person blows into the machine, the breathalyzer, and they blow all zeros, well they are on drugs most likely. Officers were never trained on what to do with somebody on drugs. I went to drunk driving instructor school. I went to advanced roadside impaired driver education, and then I went to DRE which is a very difficult class to get into. Then it's 2 weeks of intensive training where you have to do final exams every 2 days. If you get one wrong, you are out. Then they fly you down to Florida, and then for one week you are testing people that are on drugs, and you have to 100% accurately tell what drug category they are on. I travel between Akron and Medina. Any department can call me. For example, before I got hired here, I did one in Valley View. So, Valley View called me. I was working for the Metroparks. I showed up, and they ask can you tell us what he's on, and I go through a battery of about 45 minutes of testing. Everything from measuring their pupils, so think of an eye doctor. I turn out the lights in a room. I shine a light, I measure your pupils. Based on that, based on you heart rate, based on your blood pressure. I take their blood pressure. I do all these things. I make a determination of what drug category they are on. The percentage of reliability of my test alone is 95% based on the DRE program. That is above toxicology reports are.

Finance Director Blaze asked does that include a urinalysis?

Police Chief Butler said at the end of it there's a urinalysis that we take their urine, only for confirmation of what we determined, and I have never been wrong. So, every time I have done it, the urine comes back.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman, my point is there will be an opportunity to grow others within our department. We are going to get people into that program because of our proximity to interstates, because of those challenges with all the volume of cars going through our City, we want to make sure that we have potential trained experts on our staff if possible.

Chairman Narduzzi said I think the school officers should be the first ones.

Police Chief Butler said we can look at all that. I can tell you from my own personal thing, I have been able to identify people on crack or PCP just if I bump into them, and that has helped me on the road. I show up and a few minutes in, I see this, and this and this, and I will tell the

other officers. They ask how do you know this? I am picking up warning signs, and I can either de-escalate or do things to help save that person and save our officers potential grief.

Mayor Kurtz said so Mr. Chairman the point is with Chief Butler on board, we are slowly, surely and methodically building this department, boots on the ground, top management. The last point I want to make is he is doing a thorough examination of our 40 year old Police station facility. We are going to work with the Public Buildings & Land. At some point we are going to determine what our options with respect to a Police station, rebuild, build new, build remote, a combination. There are so many variables that go into that, including assessing our current situation, our current facility. I had the original architect provide us plans so that we can determine whether load bearing walls isn't financially compatible to rehab or reconstruct. Our existing facility is one option. So, we are going to examine all of that in an effort to present to Council at some point, and then begin the process of getting everybody engaged so that we get the Council, the Finance Director, everybody will be part of the process. Right now we are just gathering facts, and so once we get to the point where we can share, have a baseline to work off of, then we can start having more meaningful discussions. That's a little longer term, but we are planting seeds now. He is very engaged with looking to the future. He is a lot like Chief Rega.

Chairman Narduzzi said a fine wine, right.

Councilperson Veverka asked now that we have 7 new officers, is it likely that they will have the Police Department pictures in the Independence Post?

Police Chief Butler said we are doing a composite coming up sir. I just want to answer your question. So, the old composite is pretty old. We are going to wait until the Sergeants are made, and then do a new composite. So, new pictures will be taken.

Mayor Kurtz said and distributed to the entire community.

Councilperson Veverka said the main target is we have 7 new officers, and periodically somebody decides to be a poser. So, at least people will have an opportunity to see who are real officers are because there are so many. In fact, in our day you knew everybody.

Mayor Kurtz said when we promote, we hire, we do put it in the newsletter so that they have a name and a face, but the next logical step when we figure we want to pull it all together and then be able to publicize something that is across the board.

Vice Mayor Grendel said so we can put that maybe in the monthly Independence Post and everything.

Mayor Kurtz said we can come up with a safety edition.

Police Chief Butler said we did do a Facebook page also, we post every promotion with names as well. Our Facebook page is doing pretty well. So, if you are not a member, feel free to like it.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it probably would be wise to have a special safety edition and maybe illustrate some of the things you have shown us even and let the public know.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said social media is probably the biggest thing because there are so many young people in town now, and that's all they use is social media, whether it's Twitter or Instagram or Facebook.

Vice Mayor Grendel said maybe social media for the younger folks, and the older folks the paper.

Mayor Kurtz said that's a great tool when properly utilized. Our department is disciplined to use it properly. The general public, there's a segment of that public that is reckless and careless, and we have to be cautious and stay away from that element because there are some squirrely people out there that say things about the safety forces and have no knowledge, no reality check. They go off on a tangent and are just immature in their comments, and they just want to incite some type of reaction. They are not contributing to the betterment of this community. Eventually, they will be exposed. We are a small community so they can't hide very long. As someone told me at one training I went to, they hide behind their little computer, their little screen, and once you expose them beyond that little screen or computer, then you see the cowards they really are. We are processing this. Between the professionalism that Chief Butler has brought to the Police Department. I can't say enough about the progress we are making, and it's consistent with what Chief Rega has been able to do with the Fire Department.

Councilperson Veverka said I understand what you are saying about waiting until you have the Sergeants promoted, but in the meantime, that is 6 months in which you don't have 7 officers so the people would be familiar with them.

Police Chief Butler said they are in the Independence Post. So, we posted their pictures in the Independence Post with them getting sworn in. Also, every new hire has been on the Facebook page. So, their full picture, their names. Usually for our officers we call them Officer so-and-so. For example, Officer Waidley spoke to us today. This is for their safety in law enforcement. This is why we have badge numbers now because unfortunately similar to what the Mayor said, there are so many people who want to incite and cause problems, they are going to target without cause just to disrupt. So, their names are Officer Fuka, Officer Mancino, they are our 2 most recent hires. Not only are they on Facebook with full pictures, but they are in the Independence Post with a full spread for them.

Mayor Kurtz said I see Councilperson Trakas online, and he has been a strong proponent of training. So, Jim this is consistent with your request of wanting to make sure that training is a priority. So, we listened to you.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I have to mention too a few weeks back shopping at CVS, and saw one of the officers come in. I was very impressed. It really makes you feel a lot safer when you see one of our officers, just the presence gives you a little more secure feeling too.

Police Chief Butler said traffic stops are happening. We are on Rockside Road. Our officers are there. We are confident with the job, and there's so much more to come. We are never going to be happy at a certain point. We want to maintain that level of service, safety and professionalism, and I think we are on track and doing a good job. The guys are doing a good job.

Councilperson Veverka asked are the officers down at the Haydite mine?

Several people began speaking at once.

Police Chief Butler said yes we are all over.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked those cameras aren't installed yet, the ones that we got?

Mayor Kurtz said not yet.

Police Chief Butler said there's more to come with that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said thank you Chief.

Chairman Narduzzi said thank you Chief.

Chairman Narduzzi said Chief Rega next time you can go first.

Fire Chief Rega said thanks for having me. Just to give you some updates. We had our major hirings in 2019 and 2020. We had some turnover then and also in 2021 we had some people leave through retirement. We are in a little bit better position in that respect with people retiring in the Fire Department. We had our big change already.

One of the things I want to talk to you about, Ohio has passed a new law with fireworks which at this time you are going to be able to legally purchase and discharge fireworks in the State of Ohio on certain days of the year, certain holidays. Ultimately, they can also set up new shops to sell fireworks. They can expand current locations as well, but the State has put it on each community to opt out of this if they choose, do not want to have fireworks discharged or sold in their City. Keep in mind that box stores like Walmart or Kmart or Drug Mart, Dollar General, start to stock some of these fireworks. As long as they follow the rules and get the proper licensing to do so, they can do that. We have to kind of take a check of this and see if this is stuff we want our community to do. I think my position on it is what it has always been, we probably do not want these in our City. The State Fire Marshal said hands down, everywhere they have legalized, injuries have gone up, some fatalities as well. So, it is a safety issue for the community I feel.

It is an enforcement thing on the Police side. I talked to Chief Butler, and he's in agreement that it's probably something that we do not want to start doing in Independence.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked when is Council able to opt out of that?

Fire Chief Rega said I think anytime now. It does take effect in July, that's the go live point, but right now I think it was February 6th where they could start taking applications for stores that want to house this stuff.

Vice Mayor Grendel said we need to get that legislation as soon as possible.

Fire Chief Rega said the other thing is to check our current Charters and ordinances to see if we have rules in place ready to opt us out of this, but I kind of reviewed it myself and I don't think we do. It might be something we have the Law Department look at. There are a few other things we might want to while we are in there looking at our fireworks rules that we modify as well. I know we put a lot of rules in place when we had the incident here in Independence, and the standards have come so far since then, have changed that we have to take another look at those items and correct those.

Mayor Kurtz said if I may Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee. Because of that incident in 1997 that devastated our community, we were very proactive with the laws, I think it would be in our best interest to again take the initiative, instruct the Law Department if you are so inclined to prepare legislation so that we can begin this process and make sure that we are making sure the public knows exactly what our intentions are.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked do we need to formally as a committee vote to have that legislation drawn up?

Fire Chief Rega said I think what we could do is maybe have our Law Department look at it. I can definitely get sample legislation from other communities that would be a good guidance. I want to make sure that what we put into legislation doesn't conflict with what we have.

Chairman Narduzzi asked is there a different class of fireworks?

Fire Chief Rega said yes, the big stuff is the 1.3, 1.4 which is community range fireworks that you would see like your sparklers and things like that. Then you have your M80's and things like that, which they could sell in stores around here. So, I think that is the part we really don't want to delve in and especially if someone could go somewhere else and get it. We don't want that safety issue.

Mayor Kurtz said and then it also identifies the top 8 of being able to discharge, there are some provisions about timing.

Fire Chief Rega said there are about a half dozen of different holidays that they can do it, and it's a range too. You can do it the weekend before Fourth of July, the weekend after, and things like that. There is a lot of fudge factor there on when they can do these. We know once you start doing that it's going to be more widespread than that.

Finance Director Blaze said they can't buy it in Independence if this passes, but you could still discharge?

Chairman Narduzzi said you wouldn't be able to discharge them.

Fire Chief Rega said well if they are selling them in Independence, it creates another hazard.

Finance Director Blaze said the proposal would not only be to prevent the stores from selling, but continuing to make it illegal to discharge even though you can't sleep on July 4th anyway because there are fireworks all night.

Mayor Kurtz said we could expand our repertoire of fireworks. That's something that Council is going to have to weigh in on shortly on is there anything you would like to add with the Fourth of July holiday, doing the fireworks again for that holiday and still do them before the Fourth. Doing them in the fall. Some clarity to make sure that we are all in sync, the majority of us are on the same page. The Chief has been very clear in making that we are always safe, and I could tell you based on comments and the calls we get occasionally from people who are reckless and discharging fireworks is disruptive to neighborhoods, and not only the people, but the animals are so affected by that. If we do it on a public basis, and that suffices to satisfy the public's desire for that, great. If we can focus on certain times, I think that's important that we invest in those times. I remember when I was a kid in school, and one of my friends in school had an M80, and he blew part of his hand off. We don't need the headaches.

Police Chief Butler said untrained people with these sort of things, they take safety risks.

Mayor Kurtz asked so Chief what is your recommendation?

Fire Chief Rega said I recommend that we consult the Law Department on how we should draft that and present it to Council, looking at our current rules and regulations and draft it together and make whatever modifications and then present to Council. I would recommend that we opt out of all activity of the sales and discharge.

Police Chief Butler said I support Steve.

Chairman Narduzzi said and we would have to disperse that throughout the City too as far as educating the people way beforehand.

Police Chief Butler said the schools, especially the schools, and SRO's can educate. Any materials we have, we can get it out. Again, I do support Chief Rega.

Mayor Kurtz said so the safety force leaders are asking for Council's support in preparing and allowing us to do our homework with the proper legislation presented to Council. You could then bring it to Safety Committee or a Council Workshop as a whole to discuss so that we could quickly pass something and then educate the public.

Councilperson Veverka said and the other thing is you probably want to get the word out to businesses way ahead of time that we have this legislation going so they don't order the stuff and get stuck.

Mayor Kurtz said give them lead time.

Councilperson Trakas said Mr. Chairman, I would just echo what Dale said, I think it's important to work with the business community just so they know. Maybe there could be an exemption for some types of sales because not everybody that shops in Independence lives in Independence. So, we might want to consider that, kind of being business friendly here.

Chairman Narduzzi said I get what you are saying Jim, but I think the safety thing would be having this type of merchandise in the store. It creates a safety issue if you have a display of all these fireworks in the store and there is a mishap, is it worth it to let somebody from a surrounding neighborhood come in just to purchase fireworks there?

Councilperson Trakas said well we could regulate how those displays are put, there are ways to do that.

Fire Chief Rega said keep in mind our regulations right now allow for novelty fireworks which are sparklers and snakes or whatever they call them, smaller items. I don't know that would change. We are talking about the newer stuff, the more dangerous, not that those have their own hazards.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I don't know if it's enticing for shoplifting. I know shoplifting down at Drug Mart is pretty prevalent, so another item.

Chairman Narduzzi said so they usually put them in bigger boxes, if you ever notice the fireworks display. They are in huge boxes so they can't put them underneath their jacket. It's usually in July so they don't have a big jacket on.

Vice Mayor Grendel said when my daughter was working there was a guy with steaks with a jacket on and steaks under his jacket.

Fire Chief Rega said just moving on to giving you an update on what we are doing in the Fire Department right now. We are currently working with Civil Service to put on a promotional exam. We are without a current list for Lieutenant. Unlike the Police Department, we only have that next grade of Lieutenant. We have Lieutenant and then Assistant Chief. We do have 2 types of Lieutenant which would be a Fire Prevention Officer who works a 40 hour shift, and then we have 3 shift officers that work a 24 hour on and 48 hours off. They are in charge of the shift personnel. This current test will allow us to off that list, we will also get OIC's. So, if you are not promoted or a senior firefighter, you take this list and it allows you to be in charge. So, it gives them some experience and validates their ability to be an officer. Part of this process that I was looking into for giving this test, I would also like to as far as the department's succession plan is to start bringing somebody up. Right now myself, A.C. Wheeler, Lieutenant Reis, we are all probably going to retire within a very short time at the same time. That is losing your entire command staff, and right now the rest of the officers have no movement up. They only have shift work. What I would like to do is bring in another officer on a 40 hour work week which will be a Community Risk Reduction Officer. This person will work with Fire Prevention and Code

Compliance. Will work as our Public Information Officer, work with Public Education. The risk reduction part would be analyzing our data and dealing with the high risks we have in the community or identifying those and focusing programs that would reduce those risks. He will also work with an Assistant Chief for training and also public education and training with our businesses and our schools.

So, I think this new position will allow some movement and (inaudible) personnel to positions that will give them experience that when the time comes, and we have that changeover, we have more younger people able to move up. So, that's the proposal I have there to do the promotional and also to later this year promote a person into the new Lieutenant's position. I would also like to follow that up with a new hire exam to backfill on the shift to replace that person.

Chairman Narduzzi asked are we looking to fill from within?

Fire Chief Rega said that has been my goal, yes absolutely, but again I can't stress enough shift work is one thing, and we can all jump in and do shift work at times, but learning that administrative side of it, code enforcement. We kind of all know a little bit about certain things, but you have the guys that specialize, Lieutenant Reis and what he does in Fire Prevention. He does it day in and day out. He learns that. A person moving up could shadow him and learn as well so that when he has to move up he has that knowledge. You can't learn it when you need to know it, you need to learn it now so you have it when you make that transition. So, that's why we need to try to create some movement here to get some of these other guys get off of that regular 40 hour shift work into a position where they are also networking with other communities on fire prevention. Our Chiefs' Association allows officers to come in. So, they have a lot to learn and network within the other communities.

Just updating you on some happenings that were going on. We did order a new squad last year in March, and thanks to Covid they don't have enough chips for these things and other parts that are on delays. We will probably get this in June or July of this year is what I am being told. That is a heck of a build time. It's been a year and half. They are telling me it's about the same time for ambulances to be ordered. So, it's something we have to keep in mind when we order the next one in a year or so. So, that unit will come in, and we will put it in service and get trained up on that.

We are also looking at our Five-Year Capital for an all terrain vehicle. The Police have one, and we use it at times. Currently it is at our station for the winter, but what we have seen with the multiple water incidents we have had last year, the one unfortunate drowning that we had, all in the Hemlock Cuyahoga river area. Then we just most recently had a person on the trail that slipped and fell and hurt himself. He was off the trail, and we had to get him out. These machines prove invaluable in getting down there and getting access to the patient and getting him out. It was the Rec Department and Service Garage who helped us out immensely on that call. They got down there with their machines and plowed that trail to allow us to get down in there as well. So, I think having another unit that is set up to actually carry a patient and having it here. The one we used for that rescue we brought from Brooklyn Heights. That actually has a

patient carrier on it. Our Police one was also used, but it was more of a personnel carrier. So, we could try to stick somebody on there, but it is not designed for that.

Chairman Narduzzi asked is that unit in the budget at all? Did we talk about that?

Fire Chief Rega said it's in the Five-Year to be approved. It's been in there for a while. If they approve that, we will look into it.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said I think that would be good even if a kid got hurt on the ball diamond, they could get to the ball diamonds quicker.

Chairman Narduzzi said they could get right to them.

Fire Chief Rega said they are nice for the events that we have. It allows us to get around to the crowds a lot quicker. It is nice that way. There is a possibility to I guess fit it with a plow and plow our own area or areas around there if we need to. I know this last storm, my Assistant Chief jumped into a truck, and he was plowing parking lots and everything. We all pitched in that day. So, as much versatility as we can pack into that, we will.

Chairman Narduzzi asked what's the cost?

Fire Chief Rega said the budget I am looking is about \$30,000, but when you start making it specialized with patient stuff, they get a little costly. I am always looking to not overspend on something like that, but it is an area that I am not familiar with.

Mayor Kurtz said we are examining in concert with the Chief's request, several multi-purpose vehicles ranging from \$50,000 to \$180,000 which would give us a tremendous amount of versatility. So, it's something we are exploring. We don't have anything to pinpoint today. As soon as we do, we will bring it to Council, hopefully sooner rather than later, but we create a dynamic that no matter how much snow we have, how much bad weather we have, we would be able to access any of our areas, especially in the park or the Hemlock Trail or any of the future trails we build. We could have director access so emergency vehicles can get there, or if there is a patient to transport to an emergency vehicle. We are looking at a more robust approach rather than a single purpose vehicle that can have multi-use options.

Fire Chief Rega said they did design the trail to allow a squad to drive down there as far as the weight goes, but it is not practical once the trees start growing up around there and hanging over the trail, and not to mention what we just had a foot and a half of snow on there. We might have gotten down, but it would not have been the most ideal thing.

I am happy to report our vehicles are four wheel drive squads, and they did really well that day. I heard some other cities had some problems with their squads getting stuck. So, I applaud the guys that designed those, and I think they held up really well in that weather.

Chairman Narduzzi asked did we just have one go out for service?

Fire Chief Rega said we did. We moved the brush truck up front so it could pull right out the front.

Mayor Kurtz said we did have a fuel problem with one of them, and the Chief caught, and it's in the process of being fixed.

Fire Chief Rega said it's back in service.

Chairman Narduzzi said I saw it coming back. I was taking Dominic to school, and he pulled up next to me. I said he's not one of our guys.

Fire Chief Rega said I have really been looking at our building in the last couple of years. I not only, simple upgrades and also kind of overhauls is one way to look at it. We did upgrade our kitchen a couple of years ago, and I think it's held up really well. It looks great. It is very user-friendly, and I think it's going to last a long, long time.

Exterior wise on the building, we are looking at upgrading the LED lighting around the building, and Tech Service is helping with this as they have time. Basically, we are switching out the LED lights within the same fixture, and I think we could definitely recoup a lot of savings off of that. It's a quick and easy upgrade. We had already done that in the building with the interior lighting.

The dorms that we have, obviously they are 26 years old. They are a little worn, and at the time they were designed they were kind of state-of-the-art, but right now the interior surfaces are carpet. The wallpaper we have is more of like a felt wallpaper. All of these materials absorb everything that comes on people's feet walking through there, and firefighters already know that we deal with carcinogens and stuff, we are on scenes. As best as we do to kind of clean up, things get tracked in, and they hold those contaminants. Basically, those surfaces are not that cleanable, so what we are looking to do is kind of overhaul that.

Also, having gone through Covid, we don't have isolated cubicles. They are in the same room. They don't go to the ceiling. They have all the same ventilation system, so there's really not an isolation there at night. Looking at what they do nowadays they are all individual cubicles, and people are sleeping with a door. In some cases they have their own ventilation system as well. So, none of that presently is in place. We do have separate officer and firefighter dorms which can serve as a female or male dorm in the future should it need to be, so that was good forward thinking when they designed the building. Right now the interior finishes are not only worn out, but we need to kind of overhaul them.

We did do a walkthrough with Dave Snyderburn and myself. Dennis came through. We brought some folks from GPD to look at it and get their input, but what I originally thought was a quick facelift, changing some of these materials. We really thought that in the end we wouldn't be happy with it. If we want to redo it, it would last another 25 years, and they really felt that was going to be, instead of a \$30,000 to \$45,000 project, it would be more like \$120,000 or \$130,000. Again, with building materials right now, it could be whatever. So, it's definitely

identified as something we need to look at, and we would probably like to move forward and try to get a plan laid out. There are possibilities for a grant coming up for Fire station new building and renovation if they are not out yet. I would like to maybe get plans in place and ready so I have a dollar cost, basically a ready to go project that we could write a grant for. That would cost a little bit money to do that, and I would work with Dave and see how we can save money on putting that project together.

Along with the dorms, there are other aspects of our gear locker area is currently open on either end, and what they do nowadays is seal the gear up, and they have a negative pressure in there so the off gassing of any of the gear would be vented out and not into the building. That's something where we could easily close those areas off and put pass-throughs in the doors, but the ventilation system is something to consider as well. So, that's another area we are trying to modernize where we are at in our building.

On the administrative side, if you haven't been over in a while, our carpeting has served us really well, and I have glued it down at least once already. I had somebody come in and professionally glue it down, and it's coming up again. We did change it out of the training room about 10 years ago, and it seems to be holding up, but the interior finish of the wallpaper is also coming off and so forth. The ceiling tiles are a little old, and there are some HVAC leaks that we have had. Again, it's something that should be identified to take care of so that we can continue to have a quality facility moving forward.

These are all areas that I would like to try to look at and put projects together, or at least get the projects together, I am not sure if they would happen this year, but come back and present those to you as something that needs to be done.

Roof replacement is something that has been on our radar.

Chairman Narduzzi said Councilperson Walchanowicz, maybe on your walk through of the buildings, we could hit the Fire Department.

Fire Chief Rega said definitely, I would really welcome that.

Mayor Kurtz said I think what the Chief is saying is that instead of just doing a bandaid approach to the upgrades, we want to invest more time into design. He is going to be looking like Chief Butler, looking at new state-of-the-art facilities and bring back whatever data and information that he can bring back that would allow us to upgrade our facility so that we are not back here every 2 or 3 or 4 years for a bandaid upgrade, but we are actually coming to you for something that is comprehensive, whether it's safety related or upgraded technology for our HVAC systems, whether it's upgraded technology and accommodations for our guys. Then replacing carpeting with materials that aren't creating more problems for us because of the sensitive nature of the Fire environment and what comes in and goes out, the sterilization aspect of what they are faced with. What we are going to look at is architect and experience with other departments. We will put that together. Once the Chief has reviewed the state-of-the-art, and how we can upgrade

our facility to match the needs for the next 5, 10 years, then we will present something more comprehensive if that's what Council would like us to do.

Fire Chief Rega said one of the things that you fall into with the Fire station, you have the National Fire Protection Association which has a lot of standards that we have to comply with. When you start cracking into major renovations to the Fire Department, you have to meet the standards, and bringing things up to standard. That's the part where we might have to get somebody more knowledgeable in that.

Chairman Narduzzi said I think you have to reinvest in your own buildings because if you don't. People reinvest in their homes. You have to keep things up-to-date. Things change every year. I think Covid has really changed a lot in 2 years just by what you are talking about like wallpaper holding bacteria. Who would have ever thought of that?

Several people began speaking at once.

Fire Chief Rega said I think at the time we were thinking about sound deadening. We wanted it to be quiet in a dorm room, and carpet makes it quiet, and that type of wallpaper would make it quiet, but in the end, it's like, how do you clean that?

Mayor Kurtz said it's 2022.

Fire Chief Rega said roof replacement, I think I mentioned this before, and it's more of a saving mechanism right now. I think this is 3 to 5 years out, and this is more of a capital item. I wanted to put it on the radar because there are opportunities here too. I think the future of the Fire Department might be in electric vehicles. Before 2030 you might see a lot of electric Fire trucks out there. So, that could mean solar panels, charging systems. I don't know. That's something that when we go to do this, we might want to find out what the future holds as far as allowing us to charge vehicles.

The other things with future concepts is a maintenance facility for Fire trucks. Mike Frojancic has been with us for about 5 years. He is our EDT Tech who has saved us tons of money. He is a priceless commodity because you don't have a lot of EDT Techs with the knowledge he has. What he opened our eyes up to is we need that interim guy. He's not going to do the heavy work, he's going to tell you what to send out, what not to send out, do as much as you can in-house, and he has been a valuable asset there. He's going to be retiring here in the near future. We have been sending one of our personnel out to get these EDT technician standards. He is currently checked off to do preventative maintenance on squads and engines, but not every aspect of that. It's something you accumulate over time, these certifications. What we could do as a community is maybe regionally kind of pull our resources, as long as we have a facility to do it in. We might have a facility where the smaller jobs can be taken care, the things that we don't want to send out and pay lots of money, those could be probably taken care of in-house. This may be an option for the ODOT garage. I don't know, I haven't been down there, but a facility where we could share the cost of a mechanic to maybe do these things might save us. I

am not the only one on this, I have other communities that are interested in doing this. It's something we have to figure out, put the puzzle together and find the right personnel to do this.

Mayor Kurtz said that's consistent with our approach to the Service Department, that has been rated the worst facility. One of the things we are bantering around would be when we build a new Service Garage create a dedicated area for major repairs or minor repairs and maintenance for fire apparatus. That's a little more sophisticated than the normal traditional repairs. We would have a maintenance area within the new facility, and we are looking at ODOT. In the Team meeting today we talked about once we take title, we are going to do a complete walk through and play what if in terms of the opportunities to utilize that facility. It has heat and water, everything has been maintained, and is currently being maintained by ODOT. The facility has not been moth balled, it has not been locked down. It has been thoroughly maintained for heat this winter. We will be in a position to talk Service, a more comprehensive approach with this preventative maintenance as well as the maintenance vehicle repair aspect from the Fire safety. It's a lot of larger issues that we are going to try to put together to see if there's a way to get some synergy from the various departments, the various needs as we look at a long-term strategy.

Fire Chief Rega said this is kind of a vision I have, I don't know if it will come to fruition or not, to put a training tower attached to our current facility. Basically, on the northeast corner by the Police Department there attached to the building, like a three-story training tower that we could use for Police and Fire training. This may be a possibility if there is a large grant out there that we can go for. I don't know if the area right there, I would have to talk Don Ramm or the Building Department on whether it's conducive to do that right there. I can't express enough the importance of having those facilities close to where the personnel are. A lot of times people build these away from there, and it's hard to manage call volume while you are not near your station facility. It's kind of like you are splitting your forces a lot of times. Having it in-house it would work really well. We have a great training room. The Police actually use our training room for SWAT training, and to have a facility that maybe they could use as well as us. For us it would be emulating high rise fires, having a stairwell that we can practice in all the time. We have done this down on Rockside going to some of the hotels using their stairwells, but it's not the best thing to do with people staying in hotels, but we do try to do that where we can. Having a facility would really be nice, not only for that, but we could use it for technical rescue training. Our Southwest Emergency Response Team personnel could use it as well. Not to mention if we build it right and correctly, then you might be able to put a clocktower on or something like to make it more aesthetically pleasing to the public.

Again, this is a more of a want, but not a need right need, but if there's an opportunity for this new grant, it could be something we could possibly do. Any questions on those?

Chairman Narduzzia asked what is your in years in the near future? You mentioned that a couple of times with retirements.

Fire Chief Rega said well a couple of us are in the DROP Program so we would have to actually leave by a certain date, and that's going to most likely be towards the beginning of 2027, so we

are under 5 years right now. So, if you think about, even what I am planning right now, it might take a good part of 6 months before we get a new officer in there. So, he has less than 4 ½ years to learn everything we know to make him have that transition. So, it takes a good 2 years anyway for a firefighter to learn what they need to know. Trying to get somebody up to speed on all those aspects, it's never too soon to start that.

Chairman Narduzzi said you were scaring me there for a minute.

Mayor Kurtz said we are talking about long term and all the goals the Chief, you know his track record, his history. He is always thinking of the future. He is always protecting the community. He is always thinking down the road. By him being so open and transparent with his goals, what his opportunities are, he is telling us. I respect that there's a plan, but we need Council to approve the plan, approve our needs in order to accomplish this plan so we are sustainable beyond 2027 with excellent leadership and an excellent department.

Fire Chief Rega said we have excellent personnel. We have good options. We just need to take the next step, and it's hard to do. There are a lot of departments in our position where the guys don't move until somebody retires, but then it might not be enough time to know what you need to know. My only experience moving up, it was a very quick transition, and we had several people leave that were in key positions. Then we kind of take steps back when that happens, and you don't want that to happen. So, I am trying to put Council in a good position to feel comfortable about the decisions that they will have to make.

Chairman Narduzzi said I think Council is more than willing to give the tools you need, so we are one step ahead of keeping that department at the rate it is now.

I think I have to wrap this up because we have Planning Commission coming up. Thanks Chief. I think we are going to be visiting the Fire station.

Fire Chief Rega said we can do a walk through.

Councilperson Walchanowicz said we could do it maybe Thursday or Friday.

Chairman Narduzzi said thank you everybody, can I have a motion to adjourn?

Moved by Grendel seconded by Veverka to adjourn the Safety Committee Meeting of February 1, 2021. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the Safety Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:23 p.m.