

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
June 6, 2023, 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
Councilperson Chris Walchanowicz
Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
Finance Director Vern Blaze
Police Chief Robert Butler
Fire Chief Steve Rega
Clerk of Court Angie Zidanic
Program Coordinator Jim Riley

Chairperson Tom Narduzzi called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Chairperson Narduzzi said thank you, everyone, for coming to the Safety meeting on Tuesday, June 6, 2023.

We have an old-time Fire Chief here, welcome.

Mr. Nelson said thank you, Tom.

Mayor Kurtz said welcome everyone from Civil Service.

Chairperson Tom Narduzzi said so, there are a lot of items on the agenda, but I think we can get through this fairly quickly. First up is going to be Chief Rega.

Fire Chief Rega said so, the first thing I have on the agenda is Fire Fighter wellness exams, so you guys may not recall this, but 3 years ago there were some changes in the collective bargaining agreement that would require the members to get annual physicals. This is a way to kind of make sure that the employee is fit for the job, although it's not a fit-for-duty type of exam, they do the same type of testing. It's up to the employee to contact them if there is something seriously wrong, but ultimately the information is kept confidential, and we know that they are getting and are being informed of any problems. It's a way of kind of making sure everyone is good and healthy for the department.

So, that 3-year contract we have with Cleveland Clinic was due this year, and it's coming due, so we went out and looked at other vendors who provide the same service. There were some

vendors that were out-of-town vendors that would come in and provide this basically in your back parking lot. They come in with a tractor-trailer and have all of the services available right there, and they do it over a couple of days. We tried to contact 3 vendors that would do that. One of them did not get back to me, and 2 others did submit quotes that were a bit higher.

We also contacted UH Hospitals and tried to get ahold of Metro, but never got a contact back on that. UH did submit a price quote on this, but they were also a little higher. I even contacted an Urgent Care, and we had several conversations, but they never submitted a quote. Ultimately, we looked at what the best situation was, and the clinic was the lowest price, and their past history has been pretty good as far as data collection and feedback about what we need to do as a department. Also, their assistance throughout Covid as a resource to assist us on what exactly to do upstanding as far as my control. So, ultimately, we decided to go with them and a 3-year agreement. Also, they were the only ones that provided a reduction in pricing over the 3-year period. Some of them offered to freeze the pricing for 3 years, it wouldn't change, but the clinics actually went down if we stuck with them longer.

So, their service did go up \$100 for the basic exam from what it was before, and then there were some additional services that they recommended in the form of x-rays and fit testing for N-95s, which are required for personnel that are using those, and with Covid that was something that we had to do and implemented throughout that process. So, there are some additional costs there that we had from last time, so last time the 3-year agreement cost us \$45,000 for 3 years. This time around it's going to be \$69,180, so there was an additional charge for the met control portion, which was at no cost last time, so that was like \$1,500, then again there was an increase of \$100 per person on the basic exam and the additional testing that they recommended. So, that's how we ended up coming to that price of \$640 per member. We have 34 members, we're actually at 32, but we fluctuate a little bit, and if we have some new hires coming in, we can utilize these for that testing too that they need to go through. Does anybody have any questions about that? The only thing I'm working on right now is I have a price list from the clinic, but they usually have a contract that goes with this, and the Law Department is kind of not getting it to me as quickly, so I am hoping to have it by next week, but ultimately, the cost probably won't change, and the contract will be similar to what we had last time. So, I'm hoping to get this approved so I can start the process for this year.

Councilperson Grendel asked Steve, do you want to have it on the agenda for next week?

Fire Chief Rega said yes, I did submit it, it's just that there might be a few; this document right here has the latest pricing and everything on there. I did upload those; I am not sure if through iCompass it updated the legislation. I will double-check that tomorrow to make sure that you have the latest stuff.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi asked so, it's not really a test for them, but they could pass?

Fire Chief Rega stated no, this isn't a pass/fail type of thing, it's just an in-depth medical exam, hearing, vision, there's some basic cancer training for the PSA test, things like that. Not extensive like we probably should be doing, but it's what's recommended through the NFPA or

National Fire Protection Association. They do EKGs and stress tests, so they're going to catch those items that are pretty apparent and if there is a problem. They'll talk to the individual and give them all the data to give to their personal care physician. If there's something really serious that pops up, obviously, if it's going to take them off the job to fix that problem, they would have to inform me, but otherwise, we just know that they went and went through all of these processes. They do get a fit-for-duty for respiratory use, that's kind of state law, so I'll get something back that says yes, they're okay to use their respiratory protection and their SCBA. So, that's something that we do get back out of this as well.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi asked, and what's different between that and going for an annual physical for healthcare?

Fire Chief Rega stated well, one, everyone goes through the same physicians, so everybody is being looked at consistently the same, and they are making sure everything is getting done. I'm assuming we've all been to some exams where we go in and you end up talking to them and they are like you really didn't do too much. With these, we'll actually get every exam done on them and we'll know from our standpoint that that boy is going to go out and he's not going to have a medical issue or emergency. We're doing the best we can to make sure that doesn't happen again.

Consistency is the key. They're able to come back and give us some aggregate data about, for example, your group is deficient in Vitamin D, we recommend you guys take some more Vitamin D. So, we can kind of make some healthy decisions about what we're doing at the Fire Department and individuals. So, that's kind of interesting, they have 3 years of data on that as well for us. It would be nice to continue that.

When you're looking at all these different vendors, not everybody provided that. Some of them had that data collection, but they wouldn't give you any recommendations. They would do the testing and you would give it to your personal care physician; they weren't giving you any feedback as an individual on that, so the clinic does do that, and we do like that aspect. You know, 3 years later and everyone is pretty comfortable with it. Everybody was pretty apprehensive about it, but we've had guys that have had injuries and they've gone through this process, we work with the clinic to find out what they need, and they get back to work. It seems to be working pretty well.

Councilperson Veverka asked when does the current contract expire?

Fire Chief Rega stated it expires I believe the end of July or August. That's why we like to go ahead and move forward with this next week; at least approve the funding. If they get me that contract, I imagine it is going to be pretty similar to what we had before, so it would just be a matter of approving that, or having the Mayor sign off on it.

Councilperson Grendel asked do we need a motion to recommend passage for Council?

Fire Chief Rega stated I can go over it again next week if you want. I just wanted to bring it to your attention.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated he's going to have legislation drawn up.

Fire Chief Rega stated it's already drawn up.

The second thing on the agenda is for Civil Service, the legislation I have on there to change Ordinance 2013-12. This was in the legislation that basically said you had to be a certified paramedic with the state prior to applying for a test with the Independence Fire Department. We simply want to change that to say that you have to be a certified paramedic at the time of employment. So, what that will do for us is if we're giving a test, in the announcement we can state if you're in paramedic school, in the process of earning that certification, that you can still take the test, you just won't be appointed unless you obtain that certification.

Mayor Kurtz asked Civil Service is good with this?

Fire Chief Rega stated yes. I mentioned it to them. They have a meeting coming up Thursday as well, and I told them when I was submitting this that I'd go over it again, so yes, they are aware of it. It's just a trend on the backend, we did that only because we wanted the highest, most professional people coming in to take our test. Fast forward, we're not getting as many candidates taking the test and there's no reason to exclude a person that is going to graduate in a couple of months from taking our test, and not having the opportunity to hire that individual. It's just a way to allow them the opportunity.

UTV, this is legislation that might not make it for this month. We've been working with a vendor from Kawasaki; their new pricing just came on June 1st. I am working with Dennis to try to get pricing or direct orders from the factory. Our committee researched several different vehicles, including the Kubota, and the Polaris, but the Kawasaki seems to have a larger bed on the back that would accommodate patients or the patient module that would go back there a little bit better. So, we're looking to get a better price by ordering everything right from the factory because the prior quote that we got had a lot of labor costs to modify a current, already-built vehicle. We're hoping to get that this week and if we do, I'll try to push it through to legislation, but in reality, it might get pushed to July at this point.

Finance Director Blaze asked what is the price range they're coming in, roughly?

Fire Chief Rega stated the Polaris is coming in at about \$33,000 - \$35,000, and the Kawasaki was around \$37,000, but there were \$5,000 in labor costs there to modify the unit to what we wanted. So, if we can order right from the factory, we drop a lot of those labor costs, and it comes a lot closer.

Finance Director Blaze asked so, do you think we have \$33,000 (inaudible)?

Fire Chief Rega stated we have \$30,000, but I do have some miscellaneous; I was looking to either do that or again these prices keep going up and we really can't do much with that. We were hoping to get a trailer and other items, but we might hold off on those items.

Councilperson Grendel stated probably closer to \$40,000.

Fire Chief Rega stated I think it's going to be considered a trailer and some other resources like the module in the back, it'll be like \$45,000, but we were going to hold off on that trailer. So, in reality, it will probably be somewhere around \$37,000 with the module I'm guessing because I haven't seen the current pricing. It literally just came out last week and we have been in contact with the vendor, but he hasn't gotten it to us yet. So, that's what is going on for those legislation pieces.

The other point of good news is we're going to have 2 promotions next week, Jason Fahl and Austin Dapsis will be promoted to Lieutenants positions on shift, so we'll be doing that at 4:30 PM prior to Council Caucus. I just wanted to let everyone know about that.

Then, just some other things that I wanted to make you aware of is our 5-year Capital Plan, I am really having to; just looking at what the costs are now for fire engines, fire trucks, and even ambulances, the costs are going up significantly. I was talking to the Mayor earlier about, like in the case of our ambulances, our current ambulances that we ordered back in 2021, it's really not going to be built and delivered until February of 2024. So, the delays are significant, and the increases are pretty significant.

In terms of squads, the next time we go for one is going to be more of a refurb than an all-new vehicle, so we're hoping that the costs are all set by that because there is going to be some cost savings there. As far as engines go, new engines, not even totally loaded up are well over a million dollars, so that's a sticker shock to us because the last one we got which was in 2021, we took delivery, and that was a refurb, but it was around \$630,000, and today you're talking about a million dollars. That's a significant increase. Ladder trucks were at \$1.4 million, now they're \$1.8 million to over \$2 million, depending on what kind of vehicle you're getting or what's on it. So, trying to project out to 2030 how much a ladder truck is going to cost, it's going to be kind of tough and I can tell you right now I'm off the mark on a lot of these items because of what's happened over the last 2 years.

So, I'm really trying to push them out longer, like another year or two. Or just keeping the schedule and modifying the amount that we could save. It will be Council's decision on how we move forward with that. So, that's what's happening on the 5-year Capital Plan, I am going to be working with Vern on that, and I know you guys will review that later in the year.

I am happy to report that working with the Allison Rose Foundation, we got the Epi Auto-Injector Program going here in Independence, so today I put out 4 Epi Kits that are now at the Civic Center, the Outdoor Pool, the Elmwood press box, and the concession area has one, and also at the Field House. So, these are designated areas, they're inside there with the AEDs, and at the pool, they're in the Guard House and with the EMS kit. What they are used for is; because

these are public areas where there are public gatherings and concessions, if there is an allergic reaction that takes place, somebody gets stung by a bee or eats something they shouldn't have they are available to be administered by trained individuals there. So, that is something that we will continue to have and if we use them then Allison Rose is going to replace those at their cost, which is very gracious of them.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi asked who are the trained people?

Fire Chief Rega stated most of them are full-time staff, not all of them, but most; and we also have members that can train them too. The program is pretty simple, it's just making sure that they notify 911 and see the symptoms of an allergic reaction and administer it. The (inaudible) last month, where they pulled it out and it actually talks to you, so it walks you through what to do, but again, this is for emergency situations. It's not necessarily for somebody who has a known allergy and has their own Epi. It's kind of a different thing where you can assist them with their own medication. This is kind of like I don't have it, I have a problem emerging and they can identify that, and they can call us to administer the medication.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated I have one more question. If it wasn't like a food allergy or something and you administer it, would it hurt somebody?

Fire Chief Rega stated no, I mean your body makes epinephrine, but for somebody who is older, maybe older than 50 or 60 that has maybe a cardiac condition, it can really speed up your heart, and that's where you have to kind of watch the administration of that. That's why we want you to call us right away if you suspect something, so we can get there. We're right here, pretty close, but in the event that we were off on multiple calls, you do have that medication there, but I would say go ahead and administer it especially if you were having breathing issues. It's usually a combination of things; it's usually either breaking out in hives, itching, or having an airway issue. You want to have multisystem things going on, not just one.

We did place a new AED out at the old middle school site, so there's a light pole right in the middle of the field, it has a big box on it that says AED. It is alarmed, if you open it, it will go off. Notify the Police about it and how to deactivate that if it's done accidentally, but in there is a stop the bleed kit in case somebody gets hurt. There's also a kit in there for the AED for giving respirations if you needed to, although anymore it's just compressions and the AED itself. So, there's some good resources in there, that if the kids were up there practicing football or cheerleaders are practicing, it's available for them to use.

Again, I already mentioned our Braun ambulance. I was down at the FDIC Conference in Indianapolis, and I was able to talk to Kim Braun, the owner of the company. She just said they were having supply chain problems, she assured me that they were not going to increase the price per vehicle, and they were not going to cancel the order, but because of delays, we keep getting pushed back. So, unfortunately, the way the contract was structured we couldn't do much about that, but we're going to get that ambulance \$100,000 less than what the current rate is. We're keeping our old ambulance going for that reason. Any questions on any of that?

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated thanks, Chief.

Fire Chief Rega stated I know Chief Butler will wake you up.

Police Chief Butler stated first and foremost is hiring. Next week Mayor Kurtz will be swearing in Patrolman Billy, which means we are fully staffed. This is a big deal. Most police departments in Cuyahoga County, if not the entire country, had massive problems with staffing.

When I got here in 2021, I met with our Lieutenants, our Command Staff and we identified that 37 was the number we were hoping to be at so that we would have contingency plans in place, we had proper staffing, we were making sure that the City received the most optimal service. I am happy to report that when we swear in Mr. Billy next week, we will be at 37. This is a huge step for us and just shows that we are a destination for the law enforcement community. People want to be here.

Department staffing, the goal was 37; Sergeant Borowy retired in January of 2023, which left an opening, and we are now at 36. We've put out a list, we had a lot of candidates. This list looks pretty good, a lot of legacies on this. We have other departments that are in the area, and they told them to come here, and they think that this is going to be a really great place for somebody to work.

In September, we are looking at some retirements. We have one additional officer currently in the process. This is what the shifts look like, with almost 7 per shift, there's a reason why this one is at 6 and I will explain that to you here in a moment; that's where Officer Billy is going to fit in there. It's because of this, we have made Brian Shirk a Detective because we are expecting Mr. Smagola to retire in September. We want to make sure we pass along the information from the officers that have done the job for a long time. Smagola has worked here for almost 30 years. I can send an officer to training all day, but learning directly from somebody who's done the job and can instill what he's learned throughout all of this time; it's almost like an apprenticeship, it's huge, so we have the month of June, July, August he's over there and is learning directly from Greg Smagola.

I want to point out something because it was mentioned at the last meeting about people living in the city and connections to the city. Out of the 7 last hired that we've had since 2021, 6 of them are either currently living in the city or actively looking. 3 of them live in the city, Officer Mileti, Officer Hakes, and Officer Mancino all live in the city and are residents of the city. Officer Fuka, Officer Ungvarsky, and Officer Bruvarny are actively looking. They have put bids in on homes, they are standing in lines when they have open houses; it's hard. This is the place that people want to live, and they get in line with 30 people, and it's wrapped around the corner, but they're still submitting bids and are trying. A few of them are even renting properties in other cities until they can find a time to strike, so people want to live here, they want to be a part of the community, and they want to bring their families here and raise them here. I will talk more about that when I get into the SRO aspect of things and why that's important.

So, we're very proud, at 4 o'clock next week is when the swearing-in of Officer Billy is, I hope to see you there. I know a lot of officers will be there; on a side note, Officer Billy has been a full-time jailer for the City of Independence for over a year, and he has earned his place here. The officers want him as a full-time officer here, I know a few have stopped the Mayor directly and told him at community events you have to hire this guy. He scored number one on our test; he has done a lot for this city. He also helped direct traffic at last year's Home Days. He knows the city and he's earned his place amongst our officers; he'll be a really good fit for our culture, our city, and what our citizens expect.

Upcoming retirements, this is important because I want us to know what is looming in the future. Officer Hoprich and Officer Smagola have September as retirement dates; Detective Wilson and Detective Wilson, Chuck, and Randy are due to retire in January of 2024. We are going to continue to look at this list to see if it has legs, if it does not, then we will push forward with a new list. We want the very best, I am willing to drop our numbers at some point if needed so that we get the best candidates. I want the number ones; I want the number twos. Our top ten could be number one in any city; we are hiring the premier people. That is important to me because if we lower our standards and go after somebody that is not an A+ candidate, it could be toxic and could lower the morale of the Police Department, it could lower what our citizens think of our Police Department, so we only want the very best.

I really, really appreciate the City Council, Finance Director Vern Blaze, and Mayor Kurtz; the support that you give us in hiring and getting the talent that these guys bring, I think has shown through. Today, Angie was talking at our Safety meeting earlier today and there is a 115% increase in just traffic enforcements. We are not all about tickets, we are about safety; our officers are making more stops, which means there are probably going to be some more tickets because we are seeing more unsafe behavior. There are more OVI arrests, that's drunk drivers. We're taking dangerous people off the road, and we are getting people that want to work and serve the community.

Everyone has been talking about the Blue Light – CCTV Cameras, we have been talking about them for a year. I hope Jim Trakas is online because I know he has talked about it quite a bit as well. The project is going to cost about \$15,000-\$20,000 for us to kick this off. I am going to be using Federal funds to kick this off, so there will be no additional money out of my budget; next year I plan to budget for it to potentially expand it. This is a pilot program, so I am only looking to start with 2 cameras to see how it works, to see if it is effective for our city, and to see if we're getting results. If you remember, we talked about this, where there will be live footage from these cameras, in our Police Department that can be viewed by staff within the Police Department. They can see what's going on and they can see suspicious behavior.

I have been working with Jim Gibbs, and we have met with many different companies. We have identified a company called Paladin as the company that we are hoping to go with. So, a little look at what this looks like; this is kind of what this looks like. This is what the cameras can capture, these are cameras on a pole, from Paladin, and what it looks like currently in a community. That is the picture quality, now, our is going to be scanning back and forth, 180 degrees or sometimes 90 degrees back and forth, but this is the quality of the video.

So, if our flock cameras pick up a certain vehicle, a make or description, we can look here for that on these types of cameras. They can work together collaboratively so that we have eyes everywhere, but you can see this looks pretty good. Obviously, with the headlights on this is nighttime. This is an intersection in Cleveland, this is what the cameras look like. I'll show you a couple more images; this is nighttime, again, a very clear image. That is what the cameras are going to look like, you can see the blue light on there, they're hidden on the pole. We aren't trying to hide anything from the public, they are there for their betterment. The videos are only kept for 3 days. Only the Police Department has access to these videos, and they are used for law enforcement purposes; if we see something suspicious, if we need to go back to it for investigative purposes, we will have direct access to the cameras. One thing that always bites Police Departments while we are trying to look for evidence is if we have to call gas stations or a hotel, it takes time to get those videos because not everyone in a gas station can access a video. You hear only my regional manager can do that; he'll be in next week.

Police Departments work with information as quickly as possible, so we own this information, we get it, and we can use it to our betterment to make sure our citizens are safe. You will see that blue light, that just means police have sight.

Councilperson Grendel stated Chief, you said that it is only kept for 3 days. What happens if something happens, and it takes longer to say hey we should look at that film from a week ago?

Police Chief Butler stated it won't be there, it's 3 days.

Councilperson Grendel asked is 3 days enough?

Police Chief Butler stated it is. If somebody wants to report an accident a week later; if it is a serious enough crime, then we are going to get that information quickly, the Police Department is already aware of it. All of our officers will have access to this camera, we don't have to wait until Monday for the Chief to come in to access it or the bureau. We would have live look on our phones.

Mayor Kurtz asked if we find something, can we capture it and save it?

Police Chief Butler stated yes, we can save it. I'm sorry, I thought you meant if we could hoard it for a week.

Councilperson Grendel stated no, just something suspicious or if something happened.

Police Chief Butler stated we own the footage, so once we pull it off, we can save it. Again, one last look at the quality of the footage. This is not to identify license plate numbers, that's why we have flock cameras. This is to identify suspicious behavior, people walking, or anything of that nature. Or we can pick up cars moving, like okay this was a white car, it was in this area, now let's look at the flock cameras down the street to see if we can get more detailed information on the car. It's all about working together to solve the problem with all of the technology we have.

The first two places we are looking to put the cameras are Brecksville Road and Selig Drive; and Brecksville Road and Chestnut Road. Why are those important in my eyes? The schools. Brecksville Road and Selig Drive, a 180-degree angle from down Brecksville Road to Selig Drove to down Brecksville Rd. Brecksville Road and Chestnut Road you have Brecksville Road, St. Michaels, Chestnut Road, Dairy King, all the way to over here. This is a good starting place in my opinion from a safety perspective for our city and what our residents would like.

What Jim Gibbs was looking for was a one-time purchase, so these might be a little more upfront, but we're not going to have any yearly fees and reoccurring costs. Flock cameras cost us a good amount of money per year; we pay about \$77,000-\$80,000 per year for the yearly fees that are associated with data, updates, and upgrades to the camera system. This is a one-time purchase, we own it, we own everything to do with it, and they are warrantied for 3 years. Jim Gibbs also believes this is fiscally responsible for this type of program. If we like it, we will expand it and I will talk in the future about where some ideas are for where future cameras would be.

Councilperson Walchanowicz asked who installs these?

Police Chief Butler the company and our Tech. Service Department; they are going to work collaboratively, but the company that we use will have a box truck that can get up there and get the initial things going.

School safety: this year was great; I am so proud of our SROs. I think we have taken our SRO Program to a new level. We are not security in the schools, we are part of these children's lives, and we make big connections. Officer Green and Officer Keegan are putting a new vision for SROs, that other schools are not doing. As you know the city pays completely for these two SROs to be on two campuses; they watch the campuses. Troy watches the middle school and high school; he is back and forth all of the time. Jim Green is in the primary school; he is developing programs for these children. Troy started a workout program in the morning at the middle school, and some of the teachers participate as well. He is helping to develop a Shadow Program; working with kids that are interested in a law enforcement career. They can come over here and really dive into it, understand what it takes, see behind the scenes, and set them up for success beyond high school.

The traffic safety program was extremely successful with our young drivers and is now going to be part of the school; it will be in the curriculum for next year. So, I mentioned that I was going to talk about our hiring and how we incorporate some of our residents. We don't have two SROs; I think we all need to understand that. We have twenty because we have residents, and their kids go to the schools there, they go to the school programs. Our officers are there, they are off duty, but we don't stop working; I know I don't. All of our officers do not stop working; they are there, they are at those community events, and we encourage our officers as well while they are patrolling, if your son is playing softball up here then stop by. If you're in full uniform you enjoy that game, you watch your children, you're a part of their lives as well, and you're keeping everybody safe. Recently, Lieutenant Murphy was with me at a schoolboard function, and he

said my kid is playing afterward and I'm going to be stopping by; absolutely you're going to stop by because we're more than just cops, we are part of this community, we are all SROs. You can see here some of these great pictures; the officers did the morning announcements again this year, the video game tournament was highly successful. I can still hold my crown as champion of Mario Kart.

Our S.W.A.T Team was out here taking the kids around. We picked all the kids up one day in a bear cat and brought them here to the school. Today we had an officer for a day win a V.I.P police experience. We are constantly creating new ideas, new experiences; what the media stated about people not sure about the police, we are opening up new lines of communication. We had someone that made a horrible joke earlier in the year, we got the information because of the see something, say something, they trusted the SROs, they trusted our security to tell us before an incident. That is the only true way for school safety, that's it. We can say all these things; they talked in the schoolboard meeting about metal detectors, this, and that, but the communication and feeling comfortable with your School Resource Officers and knowing there's a real, true connection that you can trust them, that's how you keep the school safe, and we are very proud of what they are doing.

Councilperson Grendel stated I think that information (inaudible) because during that campaign there was a lot of misinformation about the city wasn't going to provide these officers, isn't paying, there was a lot of things bad information that came out that I think that needs to be straightened out. So, Mayor, if we can get that word out so that people know the reality of what the City is doing.

Mayor Kurtz said we can put that in the update, but the Chief, who spoke at the Town Hall meeting with the schools, was well received in terms of his explanation, his story, and what the City's doing.

Councilperson Grendel stated safety is about the truth being told and the information has to be available because that's the worst thing you can do, mislead parents that their children aren't safe or that they need to have armed guards and everything else that was told. That is something that has to be relayed, and everyone should know about what is being done. Chief, I always say you've done a tremendous job of getting that word out.

Police Chief Butler stated I have high expectations. I know the Mayor has high expectations, but for me, I have high expectations for the department as a whole. We want to change the idea of SROs, and I can tell you for the most part both of them believe they are on year-to-year ability to be in the schools. I meet with them and then I determine if we're going to extend them or am I going to put a different officer there, they're earning their spot there. What do I mean by earning their spot? Are they developing programs, are they going above and beyond? I don't need an SRO that wants a retirement job, that is going to sit there and be in the office. I need an SRO that is walking the hallways and knows the kids' names, someone that is going to be at Home Days knowing who the kids are. If there is a problem, let me give you an example of this; I had somebody call me about a speeder on the street every day, so I made some calls and Officer

Keegan knew exactly who it was. He said I know the car; I know who it is. He talked to the young man at the school, and he said do you know where the Chief is right? He's at your house.

We had a big talk with him and a big talk with his parents; we stopped the behavior without a ticket, without a traffic stop because we know the kids, we know the cars that they drive, we know where they are, we're having connections. Sometimes we need that, we need a stern talking to, especially some teenagers and their driving habits, but we cut it off at the source. We didn't need to spend overtime money and hours of the officer's time sitting on the street waiting for that car to go by. We knew it because the officers are going above and beyond their normal expectations and what other cities are getting.

The firearm buyback program: this is the only legislation I have in June, and I really hope I get your support. Last year we did this, and the fact of the matter is our officers are very proactive. We are getting guns off the streets and it's important that we do that. We then turn them over to federally licensed dealers approved through the ATF that make sure that the guns are going to the right people allowed to carry them and that they are law-abiding citizens. We have 53 handguns that we have seized and are ready. They are seized by the court, so understand that the judge and everyone sees this, they understand that they are part of the case and part of the plea or sentence for those individuals that the city gets the guns. There's nothing we can do. We can't reuse them in the Police Department, we can't take these guns out on the road, and all we can do is send them out to these people that can make sure that they go to the right hands.

Atwell's is somebody that we have worked with for a very long time, and they have the gear that we need. There are other companies, but they don't have all the gear we need. There is a company near Columbus named Vance's; they have a lot of firearms pieces, but they don't carry flashlights and other gear that we do need. It betters us as a Police Department, and I do appreciate your support in getting this turned over to the right people. However, just so you know, we do look at these in any capacity and if anybody is interested in purchasing one of these; you can say you want it, but you do need to pay your money and pick it up in Painesville at Atwell's. This is what the ATF would like to see. So, I will get you the date and time that Atwell's will be here to look at these and finalize the transition to them. I hope I have your support on this.

The U.S. Marshal position: something that I don't know if you guys are aware of is that we have an officer that is full-time on the road and is part-time with the U.S. Marshalls. He is sworn in with the U.S. Marshal Department and it has been a huge success. We brought this back in January of 2023, we had the U.S. Marshals here, we did an interview process, and we selected Officer Mileti to be on that task force. He has done a phenomenal job. We had a couple of thefts from autos at our childcare facilities, Nest and Goddard. People are pulling up to drop their kids off, another car would pull up steal a woman's purse and drive off. It has happened about three or four times. We weren't getting a lot of help from the childcare facilities no matter how much Jess and I went there. We tried to engage them; we'll help you with your safety, but they never called us back.

Office Mileti took it upon himself, he did a lot of research, other cities were getting hit, and he himself personally found them and arrested them. He got them and brought them to justice, one of which is going to be involved in a RICO case; he is going to be seeing a lot of time. There was an aggravated robbery at Sunoco in 2021 before I got here. That person had a warrant, so he had never seen the Judge, he was just a wanted individual. He tracked down that warrant, he found him, we got the Marshalls involved, he got our SWAT Team involved, and he arrested that suspect.

Two felony DV warrants out of the Red Roof; felony DV, which means these are repeat violent offenders. A female may have been pregnant, something of that nature, but a violent, violent individual; he got both of them. A drug suspect who was involved in multiple pursuits within this city. He hunted them down, he got them. This sends a message to those that come from out of town, we don't mess around. You might commit a crime, you might make it away that day, but we have resources. We have Federal resources; we're going to come, and we are going to get you. We don't play around with those sorts of things. So, this is really good; the investigative tools and the technology we get by being part of the Marshals Task Force is really great. The cost to our city is overtime; the Marshals does not help us and reimburse us for any of the overtime for the time he spends on this.

This year, so far, it has been about 70 hours of overtime, but I feel that the benefits far outweigh the costs, and we are going to continue to use that. He only works on Independence cases, so it's something that has affected our City, our residents, and the image of our community. What I mean by that is a domestic violence case still impacts our image because it's a business, and if that business doesn't look good because of something that is going on there, then that impacts our image. So, we need to make sure that people know that they cannot be playing games in our city. I feel that it is valuable, and we are proud of him.

In 2024, there are a few things that I will be asking for. I have a general operating budget, I am going to be meeting with Vern and the Mayor this month to talk about my budget, it looks really good and promising. There's not a major increase, the only line item I am going to be seeking a little bit more money on will be my general operating budget. I want to buy more speed signs for the City. I talked about it in 2022, and I talked about it again this year, I just don't have the money this year. People want these, they want them on their streets, they want them on Hillside, they want them on Chestnut, they want them on Brecksville. They want a reminder to people out of town, people that are driving through our City, to respect our laws.

It has been proven that signs like this slow people down. It is a reminder, they see it, it's flashing, it catches people's attention, and they just get concerned that they are either being recorded or that it's a traffic camera that is going to give them a ticket. It slows people down. They have done studies on this, and it does work. These are utilized in other cities, if you drive by some of our neighbors down on Brecksville Rd., you'll see one every single time before you get on the highway. You drive through Seven Hills, there are a few over there; these are used throughout. We have identified a company, and these are about \$5,000-\$6,000 apiece. What you do not know, maybe some of you do not know is that this does record data. We use that data to implement traffic details.

While we are doing well with staffing, seven are on the road; even if all of them are working and nobody is on vacation, we can't be everywhere at once. So, we need to be smart. Just having somebody sit there and run radar and hope to catch somebody is not always the smartest move. We use the data to say between the hours of 2 PM and 4 PM, we see a major increase in speed violations, so this is the time we are sitting there. Maybe some of you saw this on Chestnut Rd. because in the month of May, we hit Chestnut Rd. and that was the entire month. We had a strategic plan on hitting it, and we stopped a ton of people because we used the right data.

Then, there was Hillside Rd., and currently it's being used by Don Ramm because they're doing some work on Brookside Rd., and we only have one sign. So, the sign helps. I would like to make some of these permanent, so if we do buy enough, I will keep some in high areas. Brecksville Rd., especially the northern end, between Rockside Rd. and the highway. It spikes at different times, especially around rush hours as people are getting ready to go to Valley View. I have personally seen this; I'm driving, I have my guy sitting at Spin, I have guys sitting at Harry's, and we can only catch so many people. We need additional measures to wake them up, and I feel that this is it.

Another thing is the expansion of the CCTV camera program. If this is successful, I see them being utilized near Embassy Suites, Red Roof Inn, and hopefully one day near Hillside Rd., if we have the internet connection that gets there. That area between the former Independence Nutrition, and Dollar General, I would like to have some eyes there and just advise people that we are keeping an eye on that area. We have Independence Beverage there, and we have Sunoco, it's good that we would keep additional eyes there. We don't have a ton of problems there, we do get some theft every now and again at Independence Beverage; some people steal some bottles of Tequila every now and again. I am trying to engage their management to help curb that, but I haven't heard back. I am trying to give him some recommendations to stop that, but at least it's a proactive measure by the City. So, in 2024 those are my two main focuses.

Councilperson Grendel asked what about near the Shell station on Rockside and Rt. 21?

Police Chief Butler stated we have a lot of flock cameras in that area. I have been trying to look further out right now. My style of policing is perimeter defense, I like to be out as far as I possibly can so that the criminal sees the blue light before entering the city. Rockside and Rt. 21, it's true for those that are coming from the Valley View area, that might be one of their first impacts. The other ones are pretty deep, they've made it pretty far. I'd rather scare them further out. We recently had a few attempts at some stolen autos at a hotel, and we did an overtime detail. These are attempts, no vehicles were taken, and we did perimeter defense. This means we put cars between the active hours that they would want to come and take cars, and I just put a squad car and an officer right when you get off the highway. As they pull out, there's a police car, and they turn around and go right back out. So, I like to play as much perimeter defense as possible.

We do like to do proactive stuff, but if you remember we talked about how the officer that was in that wrong-way pursuit, where they saw the suspicious car on Chestnut Rd. before they broke

into any cars. They were in a stolen car, they were in our city at 3 AM; we're doing proactive patrols, but I do love perimeter defense. Keeping the cameras near our perimeter with that blue light shining shows that we're watching before you even think about doing anything in our city.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated just go back to the radar thing. The system that Newburgh Heights has, that's a big money maker.

Police Chief Butler stated a big money maker, but that's a different conversation. I am about safety, but you do have to realize that there are positives and negatives, there's a money aspect that is very positive and I can talk about money, but I am here for safety, and I am here for stopping. So, if someone is breaking the law and we stop them, we are making an impact before they do anything. If I take a picture of your car and I send you a ticket 2 weeks later...

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated well, you could fund a lot of your other things with that program.

Police Chief Butler stated that would be a future discussion during my finance meetings. If that's anything that City Council or the Mayor or the Finance Committee wants me to investigate, I will always provide data on those things.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated you could pick people off left and right on I-77.

Police Chief Butler stated it's a possibility, we just have to remember too that we do use our traffic details to educate. This would take away any discretion that we do have in that case.

Mayor Kurtz stated I'm not interested in cameras at this point.

Police Chief Butler stated so, if you do a camera, you can't change your mind on these. It's a ticket, you get that ticket, you're going to Mayor's Court, nothing else. The police cannot educate or do anything further with those.

Mayor Kurtz asked the school zones, that I can balance that in my head, but the rest of it...

Finance Director Blaze stated that's a relic from the past. Kids used to walk and bike to school; nobody does that anymore. So, it's kind of more theoretical about slowing down in the school zones because nobody is out there.

Mayor Kurtz stated well, they'll get a \$200 ticket.

Several people began speaking at once.

Finance Director Blaze stated if you're done, I'd like to ask the Chief about another issue.

Police Chief Butler stated that's all I had to cover.

Finance Director Blaze stated it's not as important as speeding (inaudible) street parking, the vehicles. I know we're allowed to park on the non-fire hydrant side of the street during the day, there's no overnight parking I believe; whatever the Ordinance says. It's one thing; a couple of people in the room live on dead-end streets, and there's not a lot of thru traffic, that's not an issue. I'm not talking about if you have a party on Friday or Saturday night and the street is loaded, but I have started to notice on residential side streets where there's a lot of daily thru traffic, and people have wide concrete driveways, even have additional parking next to a garage, and they're pulling vehicles out of the garage and onto the street at 7 AM. They do not come and take them back until around 5 PM or 6 PM.

I just personally feel that is starting to change the character of the community. We're starting to have more daily street parking on streets that have a lot of continuous traffic; and if the Mayor would bless this, if your guys are out on the road and start to see that if they're too close to a corner or it's a street where there are too many cars, we don't have wide enough streets to have two lanes of traffic and a third lane for parking, so somebody is going to have to stop. It's just something that creeps into the community over time and before the next thing you know we have a community of daily street parking.

Police Chief Butler stated if it's a violation, we obviously make contact with the homeowners and we try to get the vehicle moved. If it's something that's on both sides of the street and is going to affect the firetrucks or ambulance, we 100% proactively do that. There is a way to counter it, but I want to say one thing to your point. They can legally do it; appearance is not something that the Police Department can get involved in, it would have to be in a legal aspect or violates safety. Because it doesn't look good, we can't bother; when the police knock on someone's door, it changes the tone of what's going on. It's no longer a friendly hey could you please move this because we don't like it.

Mayor Kurtz stated with all due respect, I understand that, but if one of our officers or you as the Chief observed. I had a situation a couple of years ago on Wood Street, it had a lot of traffic in the morning, and they were parking their cars right there close to the (inaudible), so 2-3 cars turned, and all of sudden you have a really dangerous situation. So, I think the police went out....

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Grendel stated we had that prohibited parking sign put up.

Police Chief Butler stated that's one aspect that you can do, the other aspect is if the City really sees something like this is a problem street, then you can change how long a car can park on the street. You can put up a sign that says 2-hour parking on the street, or 4-hour parking on the street. You can stop 12-hour parking, we did this in Cleveland Heights on many streets, and we limited how long you could keep your car parked on the street. So, there are things that can be changed, but if it's illegal and is too close to the intersection or is a safety or danger risk, there's no question in my eyes that we would proactively do that. We have had instances where officers knock on the doors if they're parked on the wrong side of the street.

Mayor Kurtz stated if the committee would like to look and see what some of the other communities are doing, then we can review that. Maybe it will warrant a, I know there was a piece of legislation that was introduced, not sure if it was ever acted on, but there was something to do with parking. Maybe it's time to look at that again and take into consideration some of these nuances and challenges that we're experiencing. It's all about safety.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated I know there's another spot by you guys, I know who the people are, but it's like at 7 AM they pull their two-landscaping trucks out and their trailers, and they park them right around the Elmwood turn. So, now you have a truck and trailer and a truck and trailer between the turn and the park entrance, and in the morning it's a disaster because that turn already is so tight.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mayor Kurtz stated we can look at that.

Police Chief Butler stated I have no problem if we want to add the signage that stated no parking on turns, I'm 100% there for you. If you want, I can definitely talk to the Mayor about that in the future.

I did forget to mention one last thing, off-topic, sorry. We have the Torch Run; the Law Enforcement Special Olympics Torch Run on June 19th or 20th. Our Officers and Vern Blaze, our Finance Director, will be running to support the Special Olympics. We'll be carrying the Olympic torch for them.

Finance Director Blaze stated he gave me 2 weeks to train so I can keep up with the guys.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated you train every day.

Police Chief Butler stated Debi Beal is going to be sending each one of you a link to our Department site if any of you would like to donate any money towards the Special Olympics in the name of the Independence Police Department, we would appreciate the support. Our officers are doing this in their own free time, they're coming in to run and support. We do have the Down Syndrome School on Brecksville Rd., ICan does their summer camp in the summer, so I believe we have a real connection to the Special Olympics, and we want to show that support. We're going to be running from Chestnut Rd. to Hillside Rd.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated Vern could do that in his sleep.

Several people began speaking at once.

Councilperson Veverka asked how many gold carts have you registered?

Police Chief Butler stated 2.

Councilperson Veverka asked were they new ones?

Police Chief Butler stated no, they were not new. One already had a license plate that they got from another city, and they just wanted to show me it. There was one that didn't have a license plate.

Councilperson Veverka asked so, how many do we have registered?

Police Chief Butler stated just 2. There is going to be a weekend, I'm sorry I have a lot going on right now, but there's a weekend that even I will be coming up as well, but we're going to set up a table at the pool, and if we see a golf cart, we will provide some additional information to them. We will also be talking about bike safety with kids. So, we're going to do a pool day on a Saturday or Sunday when we see the highest population of golf carts just to educate and walk around. You have to recall you don't need to check anyone that already has a license plate, they may choose to do that, but we can't force anybody to do it. If it goes over 20mph, it is already a motor vehicle. Our ordinance was designed for safety, for the under 20mph golf carts. The vast majority already go over 20mph.

Councilperson Grendel stated I see a few at the baseball games too, but they all seem to have license plates, and they all seem to have seatbelts.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated I have my license plate.

Finance Director Blaze stated when we were discussing this back maybe last year, and I kept hearing golf carts. I was thinking of a golf cart from a golf course, and we went out of town for Memorial Day weekend, it was our daughter's birthday, and these are not golf carts. These were easily keeping up with the flow of traffic on a 35mph street.

Councilperson Walchanowicz stated yeah, these are not \$6,000-\$7,000 golf carts. These are \$12,000-\$15,000 golf carts.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated I get a lot of calls about them, (inaudible) thinks I like them, but they're still a car.

Police Chief Butler stated they are motor vehicles.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated so, like the pickleball courts, there are like 5 of them lined up on the grass. So, one guy asks can I park my car over there?

Police Chief Butler stated I understand.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated, and those are the kind of things that I don't care, but we've got to say something because it's just going to get worse.

Police Chief Butler stated you're not going to make everyone happy. It just depends on what sort of, you know, it's difficult for me to say. I see it both ways. I understand the Independence way as well, where you have residents who are coming up in golf carts, they are not taking up parking spaces at the Civic Center. It's elderly people that are typically playing pickleball, they want to be a little closer to the court, and they're not damaging our grass. It's different, there's a weight differential. I get that they're motor vehicles, but where do you draw the line?

Several people began speaking at once.

Police Chief Butler stated we have to be a little flexible. If they're unsafe, if there are kids hanging off these things, then we are going to act. That's the goal and what I've talked about; I've had meetings on this, I just had a meeting at VIPs, and I said this is an open discussion about golf carts, and again, I have no dog in this fight. It doesn't matter to me one way or the other, but if there is a safety-related issue we are going to strike. I'd much rather be in a golf cart rather than a bicycle if I was in a traffic accident. Bicycles are allowed to take up the full road and drive anywhere, including Rockside Rd.

Councilperson DiGeronimo stated I want to make a comment. So, two comments, number one, I appreciate all the information, but with both Chiefs here and all of the added staff and promotions we've had recently, I look at the list and I can probably pick out 4 people. I don't know the police officers, but I'd like to if there's an opportunity, whatever it may be. If it was a part of the Post, we could say here's the 2023 roster.

Police Chief Butler stated you guys are all getting a picture next week, but I do want to say a few things with all due respect to everybody. One, if anyone wants to come to a VIPs meeting, including City Councilmen, I 100% support you in doing that. We have an officer at every one introducing themselves and talking about what they do day to day. Our officers are out there, and they will talk to you when they drop off your mail. Our officers are in the schools, so they probably know your kids pretty well as well. They can't meet everybody all the time, but they are there. Honestly, with all due respect, our officers are making every attempt to know every single person, but they can't be everywhere.

Mayor Kurtz stated what he's saying is he'd like to see a picture of all of the officers.

Police Chief Butler stated you are getting a Police Department deposit next week.

Fire Chief Rega stated for the Fire Department we were waiting for the promotions to come through, and we have some new part-timers coming on board, so we just wanted to make sure the changes were...

Councilperson DiGeronimo stated number two, the Chief brought up the speeding signs, and Vern brought up parking on the streets and close to intersections, and I brought that up at the Strategic Planning session about the vehicles and pedestrians, and to me, that's just a risk we deal with, we have all the time. A couple of months ago a seventh grader at Wadsworth was hit by a vehicle and the student died. It was a quarter mile from the school, and I don't think there

was anything wrong that happened, but it was just something that happened in the community, and I just want to see us putting in some focus. If we think there's some speeding going on, and if we identify some streets or some areas, I'd like to see maybe some engineering controls, something we can do beyond putting a police officer or a sign or a sign in the grass. I just don't want to, I mean that's like a devastating day to have to deal with that, but it's like what can you do? We have thousands and thousands of vehicles; if we know that there are some troubled speeding areas, what can we do from an engineering standpoint? We really need something permanent to slow down vehicles if we can. I don't know where that is, between the Safety Committee, Streets Committee, and Public Lands.

Mayor Kurtz stated you have talked about this for some time now, about dome safety issues, especially in proximity to the schools and kids walking. I just heard stories last night about how kids run across the streets because they have friends on both sides of the street. It's a residential street, but they run right across, and somebody that's coming down the street going 25mph, and you don't think that kid is going to run across in front of you. In the old days, you would have stopped. Today, they're so focused on what they're doing that they just run right across the street because their friends are there.

Councilperson DiGeronimo stated that's my street. We have the school zone, and I drive through Rt. 21 and there are no kids out there, I'm going 20mph. I go down Sunset and it's like I'm in someone's living room.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's the story though and that's the street. They run right across the street and thank God no one is...

Councilperson DiGeronimo stated there are things we can do.

Mayor Kurtz stated the officers can stop and talk to these kids, see them, and talk to them. Give them a badge, tell them hey look you can't run across the street without looking both ways. We think we're educating everyone, but there are these isolated cases, and it's so easy because they're so friendly, and they think it's a nice neighborhood. I might run across to John's house all excited about something forgetting that I'm crossing a public road.

Councilperson Grendel stated, and the other thing I've heard, I was at the pool on Saturday, but one of the crazy things now is the kids will purposely dart their bikes across the street just to see if they get some kind of reaction from the cars. They have no idea of the danger that they're doing, but they do that up near the Chestnut Woods development. They're doing it on purpose, it's not even to see a friend, it's just to get a reaction from the driver.

Mayor Kurtz stated another example of what we're trying to do, the Chief was very clear that we're going to be out there talking to kids, we're going to be constantly educating them and their parents because we don't want to miss something that we'll regret if we haven't taken every step possible. We do the best we can, very proactive, and I appreciate it.

Councilperson Veverka asked Tom, do we have any further information, at our last meeting we were talking about the gun range, and there were a number of questions that came up. What else do we know now?

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated I've heard nothing about the gun range. Are you talking about the one on Pleasant Valley?

Councilperson Veverka stated yes.

Police Chief Butler stated ODNR, the last time we talked to them they received no complaints or violations; remember they oversee it. They have been more than accommodating to the Police Department. They have opened up communication with us, and we've stopped down, we're welcome to stop down whenever we want. There's a giant hill there and these are championship shooters that are some of the most highly skilled shooters in the country. One of which is number 2 in the country. These are professionals.

Councilperson Veverka stated except for their guests.

Chairman Tom Narduzzi stated if anyone has anything else, we have 2 minutes left.

Mayor Kurtz stated Mr. Chairman, we are looking at reviewing some proposals about operations and logistics for both the Fire Department and the Police Department, and the Service Department as an initial step to look at potential facilities. So, we're taking a step to see what our needs are, defining our needs, and looking up personnel for Police and Service before we engage the next step. It's a needs assessment based on operations and logistics. So, when I have some more information, I'll give that information to the Public Lands Committee, that way we can deal with them both; to follow up on the Strategic Plan initiatives that Council embraced, and what we can move forward on.

There was no other business.

Moved by Grendel seconded by Veverka to adjourn the Safety Committee Meeting of June 6, 2023. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the Safety Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:13 p.m.