

**CITY OF INDEPENDENCE
SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES
AUGUST 2, 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 Anthony Togliatti
 Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz
 Finance Director Vern Blaze
 Police Chief Robert Butler
 Fire Chief Steve Rega
 Lieutenant Martin
 Officer Hakes
 Officer Mancino

Chairperson Tom Narduzzi called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Chairperson Narduzzi said thanks for being here everybody. It should be a quick meeting. I wanted to update everybody on the Police and Chief Rega is going to piggyback on some of the stuff that Chief Butler is going to talk about, and then we will get to the golf carts.

Police Chief Robert Butler said I want to give you guys some updates. First and foremost, we recently had our Sergeant promotions. Mayor Kurtz promoted Scott Sedlock, Everett Hayworth and Shane Bates to the rank of Sargent. This effectively brings us to where we wanted to be earlier this year where we talked about getting two supervisors per shift. The Sergeants are going to be very highly trained. We worked today, myself and Lieutenant Martin, on setting up training for them to attend. We also started a FTO Program for supervisors. We are one of the few departments that do that. We met with the Sergeants. We allowed the Lieutenants to give them training inside, what is it like to be the Lieutenant. What they have to focus on, how to be a successful leader in Independence. This way they can slip right into these ranks. They are going to be in a shadow program with the Lieutenants. It's different, many departments do not do this, they just say congratulations here's your badge, you are now a Sergeant. They do not put this time and effort into the success of their team, and we want to be different.

We have more training upcoming. We are going to be working with our Clerk of Courts Angie, our Prosecutor Bud, our HR Director Bridget. We want to bring all of them in. We want to bring as much knowledge for the Sergeants to have as possible so they can be successful, a highly trained resource for the officers. If there is ever a time that you need something, and you call for an OIC, we want to make sure that there's a supervisor there that's on shift that can help train, can be a resource to the officers and anyone that calls with that advanced training.

All of them will be going through FBI supervisor training that is starting next year. We already have two of the three signed up in March. Myself, I will be attending that training as well.

We also today scheduled in November a pursuit training through the State. We are going to continuously do that. That was one of the themes of our field training program with our Sergeants is that we are never going to let them become complacent. We want to continue to push them to train, grow, learn from those around them and elevate the position to something that's different.

In the past some of you have called me or you text me, and I don't know who is listening to this online about hey I see a suspicious person in here or we have somebody who is panhandling over here. I would encourage everyone on Council to contact our non-emergency line and ask to speak to an OIC, that's an Officer in Charge. A lot of times if a resident contacts you, and says I see a homeless person, a suspicious person standing here. Our officers are going to have follow up questions. When you text me directly, I have follow up questions, but you are not the person that is calling us.

In the example that recently happened about a month ago, a Councilperson contacted me saying there is a suspicious person doing x, y and z, and they are panhandling for money. That we can write a citation for, but we need a victim. So whoever contacted the Councilperson is the one we need the Police to speak to. So, I urge you to contact the non-emergency line so that we can allow our officers to get the proper information to do their jobs.

Finance Director Blaze asked what is that phone number.

Police Chief Butler said it's 216-524-1234. When somebody contacts you, you can tell them to please contact them, and you can follow up afterwards. Did the Police take care of it? You can speak to an Officer in Charge. Now we have two Officers in Charge per shift that can help get that information, but we really want the officers to be able to communicate as opposed to I see a person standing on the corner. The officers might say what is that person wearing? Do they have a hat on? I see three people standing, which one is the one that is doing it? They have follow up questions and love that communication, and we want to continue to encourage the citizens to contact us.

Lateral posting is forthcoming. Mayor Kurtz has signed a document allowing me to engage in conversation with the Civil Service Commission. We have a few open spots currently, and we hope to post in a few months so that we can continue the progress that we have all been making with the department.

School safety is something that I am going to turn over. There are multiple slides on this. I want to kick off school safety with our Lieutenant Martin. He is in charge of our training, and I am going to turn things over to him.

Lieutenant Martin said hello everybody. We got into the high school and did some familiarization with the school with the SWAT team members. We are a multi-jurisdictional

unit. So, like for example the officers there, three are from Brecksville and one was from Brooklyn Heights. We basically just cover what it's like to work inside that environment, different tactical considerations and covered hostage rescue techniques inside the school building which is basically what we would have to do should there be a working incident at the high school.

I know the school staff was happy we were there, and we got a lot out of it and had a really good training day there.

We have appointed two new members from Independence to the SWAT team, Joseph Mancino and Victor Hakes. So, I am just going to let them tell you a little bit about themselves.

Joseph Mancino said I have not been with the department as long as some others, but I have been since last December. Before that I spent three years with the City of Berea. During my time as a Police Officer, it was something that I always saw going after. I was super excited to be chosen. I still have to prove that they made the right decision, and I am going to make the best impact that I can for the City.

Mayor Kurtz asked where did you grow up?

Mr. Mancino said in Independence.

Mayor Kurtz asked where do you currently live now?

Mr. Mancino said Independence.

Police Chief Butler asked where did you go to high school at?

Mr. Mancino said Independence.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Vice Mayor Grendel said he's a very good running back too for the Blue Devils.

Councilperson Veverka asked and what year did you graduate?

Mr. Mancino said 2011.

Councilperson Veverka asked and you are in the Alumni Association?

Mr. Mancino replied yes.

Councilperson Veverka said good point.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Officer Victor Hakes said I didn't go to school here, but I reside here. I was in Valley View, I worked there for eight years. I was in the Marine Corps for 8 years. While I was in Valley View (inaudible) and on SWAT. When I came to Independence on the same lateral test as Joe, we both were given the opportunity and probation to try out for the SWAT team. I made the team again, so it's an honor and privilege to be part of that organization.

Mayor Kurtz said he's a challenge with his shooting scores, tell the truth.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said we are really blessed with the caliber of people we have in this department. As a matter of fact, Leeann, is she as good a shot as you?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said I say that because he's very respectful of his shooting.

Finance Director Blaze asked Victor if he said he was in the Marines for 15 years?

Officer Hakes said it was 4 ½.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Lieutenant Martin said so both of them went through a pretty intense physical fitness qualification, and rifle qualification where they have to qualify on targets that are half of the size of the normal standard target. They both did excellent. Victor was a member of our team before when he was in Valley View, and I am glad to have him back.

We had an arrest warrant to serve at a home the other day, and Victor came right back and stepped in like he was never gone. So, we are very happy to have both of them back.

On October 14th the patrol is going to be training in the high school. All of the patrols, the detectives, even the Chief is going to go through this SORAC training. Everyone will be required to go through it. SORAC stands for Single Officer Response to an Active Threat. So, basically the unfortunate Uvalde type situation that we are all hoping never happens, but we have to train like it's going to happen tomorrow. During that training we will be covering interior breaching. As you can see on the slide, the tool you have to use and how breaching an outward opening door is different than breaching an inward opening door. We are going to drill home the message that we are going to get into the building.

We are going to train the patrol officers on (inaudible) rescue techniques. We are going to go through some scenarios on how to handle a hostage rescue operation from the patrol level. There is going to be a little classroom time on mindset, the proper mindset when you are going into a situation like that.

So, we are going to do an all-encompassing training day where everyone is going to go through. We are glad the schools are working with us, and we are going to build on that relationship. We are looking forward to that training as well.

All throughout the summer, or some of the summer, we have been given fobs for all the schools to be able to get in, and all our patrol officers have been doing walk throughs already to get familiar with the school buildings. So, if they need to go to a certain area, they know where that is. We are really leading into this school safety, and we are going to be a well-trained department in the areas that you can have as far as responding to that threat at our schools.

Chairperson Narduzzi said I have a question. Have the children been in any kind of situation if there was?

Lieutenant Martin said ALICE training would encompass that. We are trying to do that as well. We do it when the students aren't there.

Chairperson Narduzzi said I know you guys do it, but my son said they had it two years ago, but last year they didn't.

Police Chief Butler said again I just want to reiterate that we are really lucky to have both of these individuals. They came from a lateral list. They both have ties to the City of Independence. They accept both of these individuals. They were the top in almost every single category, from shooting to physical fitness. They earned their positions. It's such a benefit to us to have people that are residents, he knows the school like the back of his hand, and now is on the SWAT team. They would be one of the first people to enter into a building if the worst situation ever happens. So, we are lucky to have them both, and I do thank them for being here today.

Finance Director Blaze said Chief, a question, not with them individually, but with the whole school safety issue. I am assuming that you would take a situation like that, that Texas shooting, once all the details are known since they really don't know at this point. Do you guys use that as a training for itself to see like, we are being told there were a lot of mistakes, a lot of errors made in that Texas situation. Do you guys use that to study what they did wrong so that we learn from those kinds of situations?

Police Chief Butler said we study, not just that, we study everything. So, good things, bad things, that other departments do, we are always looking at those things. Uvalde, where do you even start with how many bad things went wrong with that. One of the catalysts of doing the SORAC training was to remind all of our officers when we do our classroom, we are different. We are going in. The point is to save human life. That is what we have all signed up to do. You hear that, you are going in. That is the single officer response to an active threat. That is the whole meaning of that. So, we know that didn't happen. Everyone knows that didn't happen in Uvalde, and that's why we are hammering this point home, and we were putting every officer through it. I am no exception. I could be in my office, and I am going through that same training. Lieutenant Martin will hold me accountable in my tactics.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Police Chief Butler said we are going to have a classroom section to review some of those things so nobody misses out.

Councilperson Veverka asked does this SWAT group also work in adjacent districts like Brecksville and Cuyahoga Heights?

Police Chief Butler said I have a list.

Lieutenant Martin said Broadview/Brecksville, Cuyahoga Heights High, our schools. Parma, we are working closely with Parma SWAT. They are a member of the SEB organization, and we work with their Chief. If this call came out, pretty much every member that we have here to Middleburg would probably come. There are a lot of resources being a SEB city that we can use as well.

Police Chief Butler said making sure we have these positions appointed and filled was very important to me because they were vacant. Getting them this training, we now have somebody that is working the road, that's going to calls all day, and if something happens, he is the one instead of waiting for SWAT. Uvalde waited an hour plus for the SWAT team to get there. We have officers that are going in that have advanced training beside the basic officers that are going to learn just SORAC. We have advanced officers that are working the roadway that have these skills that can lead the charge and get things going.

Councilperson Veverka asked would that include like the Lawrence School? I realize that the main part of Lawrence is out in Northfield. Does that include any private school?

Lieutenant Martin said 100% yes.

Finance Director Blaze said well that one is on Wallings.

Mayor Kurtz said any of those daycares, anything under our umbrella.

Lieutenant Martin said if there's an active shooter, the thing about these tactics are they are concepts, and they are easily applicable to multiple types of structures. So, we will be training this at the high school. I feel that our most valuable resource is in these buildings, but if something like this occurred in an office building on Rockside Road, it's the same tactic. It doesn't change. So, we train them up there, get them ready for the worst of the worst, and this all applies to any building in this City, anywhere.

He said if I can repeat something that I learned in the Marine Corps, locate, close with and destroy.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Lieutenant Martin said that was part of the problem in Uvalde, and I mentioned that part of the training is going to be training on the mindset you have to have.

Councilperson Veverka said I was pleased to hear you were training in the high school. I was also pleased that you added that you had your officers familiarize themselves with the middle school and the elementary school, particularly now while it's summertime. That's a great time, there wouldn't be extra concerns by the young kids.

Police Chief Butler said it was mandatory. We did mandatory foot patrols. All of our officers were taking extra time out of the day to walk the schools.

So, this is not just a one-off thing as well. Other departments might say oh we are focused on school safety, and then next year it's no longer part of their mindset. School safety, we are in it for the long haul. We want to make sure all of our children, our residents, and our adjoining cities that we do help defend as well are safe.

We formed a Safety Committee Task Force that includes myself, Lieutenant Martin who is also the SEB Commander, and soon to be the SEB Commander, Vice Superintendent Dreiling and former U.S. Marshal Mike Young. He is a former U.S. Marshal, and he also coming here to help us. We have meetings. We have a meeting coming up in August. We are going to continue these meetings at least quarterly. We did walk-throughs through the school, myself and Lieutenant Martin. We talked about school mapping, having maps that are very easily identifiable so that if an officer goes in, they know where to go. Even no matter how much you walk through a school, anything else like that, you might have a Valley View officers, you might have somebody else, mapping needs to be very simple to show where somebody has to go for the threat and not be confused.

Numbering of classrooms, when we all discussed this, the Superintendent stated that it's not good. Right now numbers don't make sense. The numbers are all over. It doesn't make rhyme or reason, so remembering all of that based on our conversations. Once those rooms are re-numbered, there are going to be external room numbers stenciled on the windows, exterior numbers. This way if the SWAT team does have to come if there was a sniper such as Victor who is a proficient sniper, the room numbers are on the outside. He sees it from the outside, he doesn't have to guess which room somebody is in. We can get it right away, and it's stenciled on the window so that somebody can't remove that from the inside. Right now they are currently on white pieces of paper that are taped to the window.

We have the new keyless entry. I have one right here. This is mine. This gets us access to the schools. We no longer have to worry about getting a key on site, break the door, anything like that. This is quick access to get into the schools. It allows our officers to check the buildings faster, get acclimated to the schools without having to worry about setting off the alarm or anything else, and we have this nice technology.

Safety checks, foot patrols as I stated we are doing quite a bit. We just have our officers going up there to do our random safety checks of the school, and we discuss traffic bollards and other things with the Superintendent to see what can be efficient to upgrade safety for our schools.

The point of all of this is conversations are continuing. We never want to be complacent and just be like we are safe. We want to always make sure we are thinking forward.

CCTV cameras as you all know are our department, Lieutenant Buehner, wrote a \$50,000 grant for CCTV cameras. Recently, Finance Director Blaze got wind of another grant. We plan on writing another grant for \$100,000 worth of CCTV cameras. If we get them, great. If we get half of them, awesome, that's really what we wanted anyways, but you always ask for more and take what you can get. The CCTV cameras, we have four licenses with the LPR Flock cameras that you all implemented. Safety Director Kurtz put into place that we can put into the CCTV cameras. So, four of them we get for free. If we put one outside of the school, if we had a threat, we knew this person, could put their license plate in the Flock cameras, and it would buzz and we would know what direction, where they are coming, if they are coming near the school. With these new cameras, we would be able to have that technology added to our CCTV cameras. These are the blue light cameras that I discussed in the last meeting.

Mayor Kurtz asked do you have a date to see whether we are successful or not with the grant?

Police Chief Butler said September is the \$50,000 grant to find out if we got those. That would cover us for ten cameras, and this new grant that Vern brought to our attention, I am not sure when we would find out about it.

Finance Director Blaze said the application deadline is the Friday before Labor Day, so I assume sometime in September.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked is that a Federal or a State grant?

Police Chief Butler said that's a County grant. The one Lieutenant Buehner applied for was a State grant.

Just so you all know because the conversation really has not centered on anything except for our public schools. I personally reached out to The Nest School, that's Le Chaperone Rouge, St. Michael's, the Goddard School and any daycares in our City. I came with my business card, I told them we would do a safety plan. We would put people through ALICE training. I cc'd the Mayor with emails to show that we are being pro-active. As of this time, none of them wish to engage us in a safety plan or further conversation on it. So, I am not done with it. I will try other avenues. We do have our business liaison. He just went to St. Michael's today. We are trying to open dialogue, and we are doing what we can.

Finally, we have ALICE training. ALICE training is when, and Sargent Borowy is certified in this. It's going to be with the teachers. We plan on doing this in August. Ben Hegedish, Superintendent, is all for that. He wants to make this as realistic as possible. We are discussing

ways to include the children in the future, but not having it so psychologically stressful for them. So, somewhat like a game where they aren't going to feel like they are in a danger zone just by coming into school one day and the Police are training these scary things. We are finding the best way to do that. Our primary concern is teaching the teachers. If the teachers know what to do, and they can get the students in the right area where the SWAT team needs them to be in these types of situations, I feel we are in a good position. Superintendent Hegedish spoke with us, and he stated that we would do this every year. We will not miss a year on this. We took some time off due to Covid, and it was just something that fell by the wayside. We are not going to let that fall by the wayside anymore. We are going to continue to push that.

Finally, I just want to state that our officers are working very hard. The reason why we want to make sure we get our laterals hired up, just because the new laws have passed for guns, we are still encountering a lot of illegal guns. Our officers are confiscating a lot of weapons still. It's still a very dangerous job for our officers, especially with how pro-active our officers are in the City which is good because it keeps it safe. If we are pro-active, it stops that from letting it get to its destination.

To give you an example, recently a Flock hit that we had a stolen vehicle. All of our officers went to that to find the stolen vehicle, and we knew that this person would most likely be armed and dangerous. We were able to safely take this person into custody, but this is what the person had on them. This is the magazine for their weapon. This is a 50 round magazine put into a Glock. This is the Glock that was modified to be fully automatic. That was a single trigger pull. So, this person was ready. He wasn't ready for us. One of our new Sergeants coordinated a takedown of this vehicle so that everyone stayed safe. This is what we are dealing with, and the reason why we can do that now is the concept has been embraced. Mayor Kurtz has embraced this concept. We are getting the staffing that we need. We are getting the supervisors that we need. When we get this lateral posted, we hope to find more highly trained individuals, and I will remind you that our resident here Victor, a resident here, grew up here, both came off a lateral list. This is what we are looking for. We are looking for the top, the best from other departments that have a connection to our City, that can know it and want to protect it the same way we all do.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked with the Flock camera, where was the car located?

Police Chief Butler said we ended up stopping it near Red Roof. It was where the car ended up getting taken down.

Someone said I believe it was the Doubletree.

Police Chief Butler said we also had one the other day. You will see it in your weekly with another Flock takedown that we just recently had. The Flock has been great. The CCTV cameras will help add that element of force that we need to get better looks at cars. Remember, Flock is designed to get license plates, not people, not the cars. It's to get the license plate for us. The CCTV cameras are going to get us the people. It's going to get us the car. It is going to get us the whole kit and kaboodle. They are going to work in tandem together. Once we have those

cameras, we plan on speaking to businesses such as the hotels, the banks, everyone else telling them this is what we have. This is our infrastructure, we recommend you also get the same type of cameras and allow our officers to watch them. We will watch them for free. Our jailers will put a giant TV such as this up in the jail, and when they are not watching prisoners, they are watching our cameras. They are relaying information to our officers. It's an extra set of eyes. Since we do not have dispatch here, we want to use our jailers to our utmost, and they can do more than one job. Everyone has a part to play in safety in this community that's working.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it seems to me that your reports, there are not any hotels that are unscathed. It's about every one, there's an incident every few months. You can just assume that all of these hotels, you don't know which one they are going to select.

Police Chief Butler said we keep a good eye out. We have good relationships with the hotels. Our officers stop in. They talk. Our business liaison tries to get to know them on a personal level. Give us information, somebody who is suspicious. You will see a lot of times in the Police weekly, we are stopping cars as people are still in the parking lot. They haven't even entered their room yet. That's what we want to get to again. Like, what are they going to do in their rooms? We don't know. They are setting up for something, drugs, guns, we want to get it before it can affect our residents; before it can affect our families.

Councilperson Veverka said and that was one of the things that I saw with my ride along. We visited two different hotels, and the officers had direct connections with people working in each hotel, and excellent cooperation with the hotel people and our officers. It was great to see.

Police Chief Butler asked does anybody have any questions before I turn this over. The last bit of training we are doing. Lieutenant Martin is coordinating this. We are going to be doing a rescue task force training. Chief Rega is going to talk more on this. All of our officers went through this. It's coordination training between paramedics and officers during our hot zone call of a school shooting. Lieutenant Martin has already gone through this training. He is going to coordinate with Chief Rega. We want every avenue that we can sink our teeth into, we want to make sure we are providing that for our officers. We have a great group.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Chairperson Narduzzi said Chief Rega you are up.

Fire Chief Rega said just to piggyback onto the Police presentation there as far as the RTF, the Rescue Task Force. It's something we have been doing since 2016 with the RNC. There was a need at that time for that capability, and we picked it up at the Fire Department and kind of ran with it. We did a lot of trainings in the schools with our Police. We also invited other area departments to do that training, and to this day, we have the body armor on each squad for the guys to put on and be ready to go in as soon as the Police make their entry. As they would clear a hallway, we would go in what would be considered the warm zone with officers guarding medics, and they would be able to treat immediately anybody that has been injured in the situation there. The skillset as far as what they are doing, it's to control large bleeds, to do

certain procedures, to try to secure that person and get them out to get assistance. So, it's a very rapid, coordinated situation where they are making entry initially, and we are not too far behind them in order to try to save lives in that situation.

So, we do carry extra equipment in our squads and in our engines for that. We have body armor on the engines and also our chase vehicles. So, it is something we do have available and ready to use.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked what does that equipment consist of?

Fire Chief Rega said it consists of a Level 3 bulletproof vest, tactical helmet, goggles. We also have pouches on front and back with different medical equipment, needles for like a gunshot wound to the chest. We have dressings, tourniquets to include bleeding in the arms or limbs and various gauze packing and things like that.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked do you guys replace your body armor like the Police do every so often?

Fire Chief Rega said body armor has an expiration date of about five years, but that is including daily use, body sweat, degrading over time due to light exposure. Our gear is kept in closed cabinets away from the light in clean bags so we estimate that it's going to last a little bit longer, but it will eventually need to be replaced.

We have purchased some of our own. We have gotten some with County grants when those opportunities came up, then we get them through grants. We are very active in the process for being prepared for that. Actually, we are looking at doing a little bit more coordination with the Police again because it has been some time where we did kind of derail a lot of trainings and things; but we are going to get back at it with doing some of these in school trainings as far as the RFT is concerned.

So, just starting over here as far as the Fire Department goes in terms of staffing. We did do a promotional in April which we had scheduled. We are going to be promoting one firefighter to Lieutenant, and that's going to be August 9th prior to our Council meeting at 5:00 p.m. So, his name is Joseph Lecznar. He scored Number One on our test, and what we plan on doing here is, part of my succession plan was to eventually move one of the Lieutenants up to a 40 hour position where they could start learning what we do on the administrative side. Along with that, we will have to have a new hire list and backfill that position as that Lieutenant leaves that shift. So, we will still have one Lieutenant on each shift, and then we will have two Lieutenants on day shift. Again, that Lieutenant is going to be considered our Risk Reduction Officer, so he's going to be working on community aspects of education and so forth and also learning Fire Prevention and some of the other duties as we start moving towards another four years we start seeing a change out of our administrative staff. That has been completed. The new hire tests we will try to get going here in the next couple of months.

Operationally, we are on track to be between 2,100 and 2,200 calls this year. So, that gets us back to where we were pre-Covid as far as our busyness, and I know that as Vern would confirm, we don't have as many people down on Rockside as we used to, but our call volume is still there throughout the community. We still have a lot going on.

Incident wise, just some of the major things that we have done. We had a house fire on Brookside the first part of the year. Bob Evans had a fire as well. We participated in the Brooklyn hotel fire. That was right around when we had the basketball All Star game. It was a Hampton Inn that was there. Our ladder truck was there for a while. The Parma fire which was at Padua, we were there for quite a long time for that one.

Finance Director Blaze asked did you go to that hotel fire?

Fire Chief Rega said no, we had a negotiation meeting at the time so we sent an officer. We made sure that there were guys going. That was one of those weird situations where we had three Lieutenants and one firefighter. We had negotiations going on so everybody was kind of thin as far as that goes, but it was a very interesting fire.

We also had a fire at Dollar Bank. It was a small one. It was a lighting issue there. Then Harry's Steak House, we had a pretty good scare of a fire there, but it was contained. So, that's what we were doing fire wise.

In terms of some things that have popped up. The Cleveland radio system, we have been on the Cleveland radio system for probably almost seven years now. So, what that means is that our devices, our portables, our mobiles, all work on their infrastructure, and typically with them there is a per month, per device charge. They had not been charging us up to this point, but they started at the beginning of the year with them. I guess with the new administration, to charge for those devices. So, that's something I had planned for in my budget, but we had to initiate this year so that is something moving forward that we will have to take into account for the budgeting. The amount is \$5.00 per device per month; so any portable or mobile radio in our system, which is still cheaper than what is being charged which is \$10.00 a month.

Finance Director Blaze asked would they back bill us?

Fire Chief Rega said there was no mention of doing that at all.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked so we don't own that equipment?

Fire Chief Rega said no, these would be the towers and everything, the infrastructure. So, we own just the radios and stuff like that, they go on the system. To try to have our own system is just cost prohibitive.

Training wise, we have done quite a bit. In addition to our Southwest Emergency Response Team units, the people that are Hazmat, FIU, Technical Rescue, those folks have all been going since the beginning of the year. We do weekly and monthly trainings for Fire and EMS. Some of

the things, just some highlights here. We did the mental wellness that was put on by Jen Vitron, the first part of the year. In addition to that, we also had Dave Freeman, a Fire Chief, with some post-traumatic stress experience, and he talked to all three shifts about what he experienced and what he went through. It was pretty invaluable training. We did our annual EAP for all firefighters, so part of our wellness and fitness program is for everybody to go to EAP and sit down and talk with a counselor. It could be about anything that's bothering you, but we strongly believe that if we all go then there is no stigma there instead of one person going. That's been very successful. We have been doing it for three years now.

Also with part of that wellness program, we are going through our wellness exams right now. It takes several months to get these done, but each person is going for those exams. It has been pretty successful with that as well. We had a three-year contract with the Clinic, which this is our last year. So, next year we will be looking into the services again for our firefighters.

We have done ice rescue training over at Elmwood Park, drivers training down at Valley View Cinemark, using their parking lot to do an obstacle course for our ambulances. We have hosted the Cleveland Clinic's helicopter safety classes. We have done three of those this year, and we have one more to go. Those are where you get disrupted by a helicopter landing in the back parking lot once in a while. Our guys actually piggyback in and train with them where it is appropriate for what they are doing.

We sent six individuals to the FDIC, Fire Department Instructor Conference down in Indianapolis. Had some great hands-on training down there. A couple of guys went through a flash-over trailer down there which prompted us to see if we could get the State flash-over trailer for everybody to go through, and that is what we did this past weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. We had that large trailer in the back lot that was used. Basically, it's a giant oven. We put the firefighters in there to re-create the conditions of flash-over and to allow them to firsthand see that so they can tell in a house fire what the conditions could be like. It's not exactly the same thing, but it gets pretty darn close. The temperatures are there. This one we got up to almost 1,300 degrees at the ceiling. We are down low, and it's close to 200 degrees, but the flames do flash over you across the whole top. They quickly put it down and it rekindles. So, it's really great training for everybody to experience.

We did training on the Hemlock Trail. We brought our Technical Rescue Team in, and we actually trained with them one day working on rope skills. That was earlier in the spring. We did a (inaudible) at Hyatt Place. We do this every two years, actually simulating a fire on one of the upper floors and stretching hose and all that.

We hosted at the Civic Center an after action recap of the Surfside building collapse down in Florida. We had two technicians from our area go down to that incident with Rescue Task Force One Ohio. So, they brought back that experience and told us what they did right, what they did wrong and how they could be better. Interestingly enough, they worked with Israeli search and rescue folks when they were down there because they had a very prominent Jewish population that they came over and helped. So, they got some international experience there working with them and seeing how they do things. Why I mention this is because we had the collapse in

Lakewood on a parking deck, and these same folks were on that, and they used some of that knowledge to help them there. So, it all comes back here in Independence, Ohio and we are learning some of this stuff which is really amazing.

Last week we were able to put together for Linda Farace. She had a kids fitness class. We threw together a firefighter combat challenge for them which turned out to be pretty interesting for the kids; so it might be something we build on for next year. We will see how that goes.

We have done multiple CPR classes for high school seniors, the Rec Department staff, Girl Scouts, doctors' offices, and then one business, Quasar Energy, on East Pleasant Valley. We have also done fire extinguisher classes for two office staffs, and we have two other classes scheduled in the fall here. So, we continue to be very active on our training side, and many of these trainings we have tried to do recently with our partners around us, Valley View, Seven Hills. We invite them a lot of times to come and sit in on these trainings.

One of the other things that we did is we just renewed our CE for continuing education with the State. So, we have three EMS trained instructors, and when they put on a class working through Marymount, they are able to put those classes on, design themselves, and host them without having to have someone else come in and do it. They can do it here. So, it saves us money in terms of training and sending people out for training and so forth. That's a big thing. We re-certify about every two years on that.

Just to re-cap on equipment. Our new Braun ambulance which we ordered in March of 2021, I just found out that we definitely have a chassis now. It took 18 months to get a chassis. I have a meeting tomorrow with the sales rep to see more details about exactly when it will be delivered, but I am anticipating probably December or January. Hopefully, they have better news for me on that. It's just been very, very slow in the production of these ambulances and getting the chassis from the major manufacturers. So, it's been very big delays. Like I mentioned in the past, right now it's 180 days for Braun. So, I may in fact be approaching you next year for a squad that I need in 2025. It's amazing, and how do you anticipate whether things are going to speed up or not, I really don't know.

Fire gear just came in about a week ago. We ordered that in October of last year. So, that's a very long time to wait for fire gear as well. So, again everything is just very slow to come through.

All of our big engines and our ladder have gone through preventative maintenance, so they are in good shape right now. We do need to spend a little bit of money on our older engine and ladder truck, but everything is good so far. We have to get through the aerial operations test which is usually done in the fall for our ladder truck.

The rest of our current ambulances are in good shape. Our older ambulance that will be replaced when the new one comes in, amazingly enough, I am being told that the trade value on it was like \$2,000, and now I could probably sell it for close to \$60,000. We will see about that one.

Mainly because people can't get ambulances. If you wreck an ambulance, how do they replace it? Are they going to turn to the after-market used? There is not that much out there.

Outside of that, we put new portable suction units on our ambulances. Our old ones were very old, and we came up with some new technology to put those on. We have a new, it's called a fit test machine for testing our masks. We did a group purchase of that years ago with all the other departments in the area. We did it again for the new latest and greatest version, so we have that this year. That's just been put into place. It's like a \$13,000 or \$14,000 item that we end up only paying about \$1,000 when we cost share that out. It just goes around each department for a month of use. So, that was implemented this year.

In the fall we have some hose testing coming up. We continue to do hydrant inspections and testing. We have tested our tornado siren several times. We had a glitch where it wasn't activating properly through CPD, but we got that fixed. We are good there.

Outside of that, we are still looking at some of the bigger projects and waiting on the Capital Plan to come through to do those. Does anybody have any questions?

Chairperson Narduzzi asked did we ever purchase a safety vehicle for Hemlock?

Fire Chief Rega said we have our brush truck which can go down there, but the ATV was on the Five-Year budget this year. So, that was one item that I was identifying this year that we needed yet. So, I am waiting for those funds to be available.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Fire Chief Rega said we had a rescue earlier this year in January. We were able to utilize the Kubotas from Rec to clear that area with a snow plow, but we brought in an ATV from Brooklyn Heights. Those are the ones you probably see around during fireworks and Home Days. We do bring those in, and they get here relatively quickly. One of them I think they drove over, but it would be good to have one right here where we can get out there quickly. The Police one is very nice, but it can't haul a patient. It's on our agenda.

One of the other things that we do, you probably never noticed it, but for the Fourth of July fireworks, we brought in, and I have done this twice, the County has a trailer. It's a special events trailer. So, when you bring that in, it brings in body armor for rescue task force operations, body armor helmets. It gives more EMS equipment. It also has tagging and some barricades in it and some other stuff. They have a John Deere gator on there as well. You can use that for your events. You just have to schedule it out. We are picking it up on Thursday. So, if you happen to see a big white trailer behind the Fire Department, that is the resource that we can make use of.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked does anybody have any questions? Thanks Chief for the update.

Mayor Kurtz said I have one more item for the agenda, unless you want to go to the golf carts.

Chairperson Narduzzi said go ahead.

Mayor Kurtz said I talked to Mayor Blackwell from Maple Heights, and they are really struggling to financially make ends meet with some of their equipment needs. So, we have three Police cars.

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said we have three Police vehicles. One is a 2014 which was delivered in July of 2013, and it's nine years old, and two 2015 which were delivered in September of 2014, which are eight years old. The vehicles were all sticker priced the same, they were \$25,560 a vehicle. What we tried to do recently was put them on Govdeals and sell them exclusively to a law enforcement agency. One of the reasons why is the number of man hours it takes to decommission a Police car. There are a lot of things in there that we have to take out, the backseats. We have to install the normal passenger seats, so we do get some value, or at least a better value for the vehicle. So, we thought we would try to sell them to a law enforcement agency. We really didn't get any interest in them at the time probably because of the mileage. I apologize that I don't have the specific mileage, but each of the vehicles is over 60,000 and under 80,000. That is just road miles, and when I was with the City of Cleveland we used a multiple of three to four times that to actually estimate the engine hours. One of the vehicles also had some front-end damage.

So, we haven't listed them back on Govdeals to open them up to the public because it would entail us to decommission the vehicles.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked what's the cost to decommission?

Procurement Coordinator Zdolshek said I was just trying to think about that. I am guessing it probably has to be anywhere between 10 and 15 hours a vehicle. There are a lot of things that go into it. Like we have to take off all the lights, all the detailing. Like I said, we take the fiberglass seat that is in the back and install the original seats in the vehicles. All the electronics, gun racks, the bars that are on the back window. None of this equipment will transfer into any of our newer vehicles because of design change and so forth. So, basically we would spend 10 or 15 hours, pull that stuff out, and end up just throwing it in the trash or try to recycle it somehow.

Mayor Kurtz said I talked to Mayor Blackwell after the meeting, and does anybody have any objection if we would donate those vehicles to Maple Heights if they are interested? She said they would be excited to be able to get something that would upgrade their fleet, and the \$2,500 or whatever the value is, plus decommissioning. I guess the good neighbor policy might be in order in this case.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I see no problem with that, to help out another community that needs help.

Mayor Kurtz said so it's something that could help them, but it doesn't hurt us at this point. If there's no objection, I will talk to the remaining members of Council, and if there is no objection,

I will call her and see if in fact they want to come see them. If in fact they are interested, then we will help Maple Heights out.

Vice Mayor Grendel said it's close to home here anyways.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you. I appreciate that. I am sure she will be excited. Dennis, can you tell Ron that someone might be coming to look at them. Thanks for your update on that.

Thanks Mr. Chairman.

Chairperson Narduzzi said so last on the agenda. So, there has been some talk about all these golf carts around town going up and down Brookside Road, and I have seen them on 21. They have kids not strapped in the back. So, I think Councilperson Walchanowicz had called me and asked to put something on Safety Committee.

Councilperson Veverka said we talked about it at Streets & Sidewalks, and that's why we said it made sense to get it into Safety.

Chairperson Narduzzi said so I guess it's just out there to get people's reaction, and what you guys think about it, what we are going to do about it. We are not going to be silent, but maybe we should look at what other cities are doing, be pro-active. I personally don't think that we are a golf cart community. There are some communities that are strictly I could see golf carts. I just came back from vacation, and they were everywhere; but they have their own lanes to drive on. They have their own intersections; so it's a lot different than being around here where do you go on. You have to go on 21 to get anywhere unless you live on a side street and go to a little shop somewhere, but I would hate to see them on 21, but how do you say you could have it here and can't have it there. So, it's just out there for discussion. So, whatever anybody thinks, have at it.

Councilperson Veverka said well I had a conversation with one of the residents in the area around Brookside, and it sounds like we have about a half a dozen golf carts that have lights, are licensed, have been inspected, have seatbelts, have insurance, have operators that follow the rules by being 16 and over, a licensed driver to be using the golf cart. Then subsequently there are another half a dozen plus or minus in that area that aren't licensed, that have younger kids riding around on them. So, I guess that's the biggest question. We have one batch of licensed one. We have another bunch of ones that are especially a problem. I know even a couple of years ago when we were coming back from fireworks, there was an unlit golf cart that was going up Brecksville Road in the dark, and we saw it soon enough. That becomes the question. As you said, Rockside definitely not an appropriate place, and Pleasant Valley is very dicey too.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked how do you tell them you can drive on Elmwood, but you can't drive on 21?

Finance Director Blaze said in the State code, the State code allows local municipalities to pass laws to allow it, and they specifically mention that they cannot go on those streets where they have a 35 mph speed limit. It is identified that the streets that have the 25 or 30 as a speed limit,

that you can pass a law to allow them, but we couldn't allow them to go onto Brecksville Road or Pleasant Valley or Rockside because the speed limit on those streets are higher.

Somebody that lives off of Chestnut could take Chestnut because the speed limit is 25 and go to Dave's. They could cross the street that's going 35, but they can't make a left or right turn then, and then they could go back where they came from.

Chairperson Narduzzi said well like in the center of town, it's 20 miles an hour, you can be buzzing up and down 21.

Finance Director Blaze said that's a State highway, I think it's generally regarded as a 35 mph street. I just throw a bunch of images there that show that across the country, I don't know where you went on vacation Tom, but they are out there. I kind of facetiously made the comment at the Streets meeting that I wouldn't actually mind seeing more of them going down my street because that could slow the cars down then as Vice Mayor Grendel opined at that meeting that they fly down our street. Actually having golf carts there would slow the traffic down a little bit.

Mayor Kurtz said Mr. Chairman if you wouldn't mind, I will have the Police Chief organize his group to take the law and let's do a little research on what other cities are doing, what their requirements are, if they have ordinances on the books. Then you can find out from your resources if there are policies, programs and legislation that would give us some type of boundaries for this. The Finance Director just outlined some boundaries.

Finance Director Blaze said in the State of Ohio Revised Code second page it says by ordinance a local government could do this, and if you do, you shall do all the following, 1, 2 and 3. It's all right there. So, they kind of give the guidance to a community on what you have to do if you are going to allow what they call low speed vehicles, lsv.

Mayor Kurtz said it looks like in the 35 mph speed limits they are not allowed, and the Police Department would have to conduct an inspection of the vehicle, and then if it passes inspection, then the Director of Public Safety could (inaudible).

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said so if you wouldn't mind, this has been years in the making, so maybe we can take a little time and maybe if you don't mind Chief you could do some research for us and take this as the foundation, and maybe build upon it. If there is some strategy, or if there is something that makes sense, you could talk about it and bring it up at the next meeting. If it's something you recommend that doesn't make sense, then we won't do it.

Police Chief Butler said I will bring it up at the next Chief of Police meeting.

Mayor Kurtz said I appreciate it. If you can get some research together, then we can get back to the Safety Committee and all of Council so if we have to do something to legislate it, then we can do that. Vern, thank you.

Councilperson Togliatti asked so we are silenced legislatively on golf carts in the City of Independence? Nothing prohibiting them? Nothing allowing them?

Chairperson Narduzzi said Debi gave me something.

Several people began speaking at once.

Chairperson Narduzzi said it says they are just used for playing golf.

Police Chief Butler said we see them come up to the pool or something. Let our residents have something like that. You will see some of the golf carts at the pool. The side streets where we are just entertaining to the children and drop off family members, that's different. My concern would be again as was already addressed, Rockside, opening up a can of worms on that. I get the concept that they will slow down people on Wood, and all of a sudden there will be this slower car. My guess is people are going to pass them, and now you are going to deal with more reckless drivers trying to go around blindly, and that opens up a bigger can of worms than was there before. That's my two cents, but I will 100% investigate. I will speak to other departments, and give you a total picture of what everyone is thinking.

Mayor Kurtz said to answer your question, (inaudible), but if someone is reckless, we are going to go to their house and talk to them, and usually if it's someone underage we will talk to the parents, and it brings it to their attention that this golf cart was on the other side of town or whatever.

Finance Director Blaze said they are electric, and we are encouraging green lifestyles, I don't know why we should discourage that.

Mayor Kurtz said I am not discouraging that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said I think you should be 16 or over.

Chairperson Narduzzi said there are a lot of questions that need answered.

Finance Director Blaze asked where do you draw the line? I am seeing electric scooters, I am seeing e-bikes.

Chairperson Narduzzi asked you aren't going to let these things on the sidewalk are you?

Several people began speaking at once again.

Councilperson Veverka said some people are putting golf carts on the sidewalk. That is the other question. I know we have a resident here. Did you want to say anything about it?

Resident Brad Russell said I am one of the licensed, insured, titled, I went through the whole process of getting my license plate, and I think I am on the side of I got my license plate, driving

down taking the kids to the pool and that stuff. I am not one of the ones that have kids on the golf cart that aren't buckled in. I think right now what is happening is there is a very small group of golf carts that do have license plates that did go through the process, that are titled, that are insured; and other people are picking up \$500 golf carts off of Facebook Marketplace, letting their 12 year-old ride it down the street. I see it in our area quite a bit, and unfortunately, I think it's one of those things that we are just kind of getting grouped into, hey the golf carters. So, there is a clear distinction between the people that are doing it legally and people that are just abusing it. They are the ones that are driving down, I have seen them on my street, drive down the sidewalk, drive in people's front yards. The ones that are licensed, we aren't the ones that are doing the sidewalk riding.

Finance Director Blaze asked what street are you?

Mr. Russell said Eastview.

Mayor Kurtz said I thought you were caught speeding on one of them, it was 36 in a 35.

Mayor Kurtz said I appreciate the time you took to come in. You can see, we have incidents over the years where we have had to go to the houses and talk to parents, and we will continue to do that if we see someone. Some of these safety issues that were brought up like kids hanging all over the carts, and that creates not only a nuisance issue but a safety issue. So, the Chief is going to research it. Thank you Finance Director for giving us a template to work off of, and we can report back. Obviously, if you have a license, you are legal no matter what. You are legal in the State of Ohio.

Mr. Russell said I would like to add that I had done a lot of research in what other communities have been doing, what laws they have passed. I would love to sit down and talk with anybody to help make this safer. Professionally I am a pilot, a corporate pilot; so I deal with risk management a lot. So, I understand we want to do this safely, but I am not going to lie, it is fun in the summertime to drive the golf cart and stuff like that.

Mayor Kurtz said can I ask you a question? You are a commercial pilot, how come you have a nice tan?

Mr. Russell said that pool is open late.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mayor Kurtz said this is Chief Butler.

Several people began speaking at once again.

Mr. Russell said we go to Cleveland, Raleigh, Charleston, Florida, Canada. It's a smaller plane, it's not one of those big guys. She goes fast.

Mayor Kurtz asked out of the airport?

Mr. Russell replied yes.

Mayor Kurtz said thank you for taking the time Brad, and I appreciate it. You will get with the Chief and maybe explore and get some additional information, another perspective. I would appreciate it if you would.

Councilperson Veverka said I have one other topic that I just want to introduce or call to the attention of the committee. I had one resident talk to me about safety related to the gun range on Pleasant Valley with one of the big concerns being what is beyond the line of fire. I know that this was a topic that was talked about in Safety Committee years ago, but are we at a point that it should be looked at? I talked to a property owner adjacent to the gun range. They spoke to me and said they are concerned, number one, it used to be a fairly regular time when people would be using the range, typically on the weekend, but now it is happening lots of different times. So, they are reluctant to utilize their property while that might be happening at any time. So, to me it was kind of two questions, it's are we in a position that is safe with the street behind and the homes behind where the gun range is? Is it safe related to adjacent property owners of the times when shooting may be appropriate or not? The other question that came up is you wouldn't think there would be hunters back there, but we are getting into the hunting season again. Is there a way that people are aware or it is demarcated so nobody wonders into the property adjacent? They shouldn't be there, but that's the third piece.

Chairperson Narduzzi said so we were talking about this. My son-in-law bought a gun in Virginia, and they said you can't shoot that gun here, it's too big. I don't know what he bought. He bought this gun and can't shoot it. So, they limit the size of guns that you can shoot there. They told him he could go out to Wyoming and shoot it. In Virginia their gun range is the same thing, they said it's just a strip of land about 400 feet wide by 2 ½ miles deep, and he said you aren't allowed to shoot that gun there.

Mayor Kurtz said well this range was here before any of us were born, and it's here. Second of all, when they develop that property at some point, it will take care of itself in my opinion, but if you have ever been there, it's down at the bottom of a gulley. It follows the watercourse and starts at Pleasant Valley and goes all the way to the Cuyahoga River at Hillside. So, they shoot into the bank at the bottom of the gulley, and anybody that has property, it's not anywhere near that gun range. That 9 acres you are talking about, it's probably on Hillside. It's nowhere near there. It has the whole CEI tower between it. There's nothing even close in proximity to that range.

I know what you are saying about the different times. It used to be confined to Sundays. It was pretty systematic, and people on Hillside would complain, but they understood they were grandfathered. It's an organization. It's not just a bunch of us going out shooting. So, I believe time will take care of it. If it wasn't down at the bottom of the gulley, it wasn't in some confined area, but I think your point is well taken. The fact is, the elevation is such that it wouldn't hinder the 9 acres that you are referring to.

Councilperson Veverka said the other thing that Tom mentions is their gun range is x, y and 2 miles deep. I know at Camp Perry when they shoot at that range, they control the waters beyond that area to keep boats out of that area for miles. I am not sure how many, but it relates to that. The fact that there are homes behind there, and even the area in front of the range, if there's rocks and other things there, it seems like that it might be a potential concern. I guess the questions raised are we indeed in a position where we have safety taken care of because obviously this is the committee? I know that in Akron they spent a ton of money on a gun range, and then after they spent all the money for the gun range, they discovered then there was an errant shot that was in a house beyond, and that caused all kinds of problems with that gun range.

I am just bringing it up as a topic of discussion because I think it's our responsibility to at least create an awareness of that.

Vice Mayor Grendel said this range has been here what 100 years or longer?

Mayor Kurtz said I think in the 1920s or 1930s.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked and it's at the bottom of Hillside?

Mayor Kurtz said it's at the bottom of Pleasant Valley where they used to have the turkey shoot. Kiwanis used to have the turkey shoot there before B.F. Goodrich built their research facility. That range was there before that. Chief, we should go on a trek one day, I might go with you, but I have seen it. We will take a walk down by Heidelberg and go down over the hill to the bottom, and you will see where they set up. You will see where it follows the creek when they shoot into the bank.

Police Chief Butler said we had discussions on it several months ago, and I have seen it, and I heard the history. There are really awesome historical aspects of it, but most of it is it's a historical gun range. You can't make rules against what they are doing based on their status and what the gun range is.

Mayor Kurtz said maybe we ought to at least talk to them, make them aware, so that if in fact they have a (inaudible), our safety forces will know exactly where they are at if they have a problem. We can address that. Just be aware of it. I know where it's at, but Dave didn't know where it was at, and he was here his whole life. The Police Department and Fire Department should be aware so if there is a problem, they can call us, and we can address it quickly.

Vice Mayor Grendel said how Riverview used to go.

Mayor Kurtz said to get to it now you have to go up Rio Nero. You can walk down to the bottom.

Vice Mayor Grendel asked is it a club?

Mayor Kurtz said it's a club.

Councilperson Veverka said additional question then, is the club insured? We are saying it's historical, but are they insured for any kind of mishap as a club? Are we protected?

Mayor Kurtz said I think the caliber of people that belong to that club, they aren't grabbing a gun and shooting. I thought it was more established individuals with a good understanding of firearms.

Finance Director Blaze asked do they own the property?

Mayor Kurtz said it's an easement or a lease. I believe it's a lease.

Police Chief Butler said they won't even let the Police come down there and shoot.

Mayor Kurtz said but Sunday mornings, if you live along that valley, you can hear them.

Moved by Grendel seconded by Veverka to adjourn the Safety Committee Meeting of August 2, 2022. Voice Vote: 3 yes/0 no; motion carried.

There being no further business to discuss, the Safety Committee Meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m.

Debra J. Beal, Clerk of Council
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 08/04/22
