

MINUTES
Police Advisory Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 27, 2022
5:00 – 6:30 PM
City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room
DRAFT

Board Members Present: Jamie Pinkham, Chair; Melinda White, Vice Chair; Winnie Wilkinson; Danielle Mitchell; John Nicholls; Kris Lukens (arrived at 5:02 PM).

City Staff Present: Chief Maurice Lamothe, St. Albans Police Department; Angela Bernard, Minute Taker.

Members of the Public Present: Hunter Denault, Northwest Access Television; Marcus Neabar.

1. Call to Order

Chair J. Pinkham called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM.

2. Agenda Introduction & Review

Open Brief Public – none.

Comment on Agenda – none.

3. Mission Review

M. White reviewed the mission.

Mission: To offer advice to the St. Albans Police Department for the successful implementation of 21st Century Policing strategies and to assist the Police Department in following the established “Road Map” as amended by the City Council.

4. Consider approval of April and May 2022 Meeting Minutes

W. Wilkinson made a motion to approve the minutes for meetings held in April and May of 2022. Second by J. Nicholls. Approved with all in favor at 5:04 PM.

5. National Night Out (August 2022) Follow Up

J. Pinkham introduced the conversation following up on the National Night Out event. She said the difference between the 2021 event and the 2022 event was noticeable. Chief Lamothe said it was co-organized with the Restorative Justice Group. M. White said there was a lot of positive feedback after the event and that she only sees it getting bigger and better. K. Lukens said she saw a lot of interaction between officers and members of the public. Chief Lamothe said that was thanks to an increased comfort level and vibe coming out of the pandemic.

M. White commented that the police department supported the community in the Recovery Block Party and Lt. Weatherby with the SAPD in particular was helpful, attending meetings and bringing a grill.

J. Pinkham said these types of events are important for connecting with the community, especially for people who want to engage but who want to do it on their own terms. Chief Lamothe said there are other events happening, including the Buddy Walk, a Career Fair (with other community partners), Coffee with a Cop, Chili Cookoff, Halloween Trunk or Treat, etc. Lt. Weatherby is scheduled to take on that role and spearhead community events. D. Mitchell commented that Lt. Weatherby is an important asset.

W. Wilkinson commented that when she heard how well the SAPD is interacting with the community it warmed her heart. She said it's similar to the community outreach happening in other, bigger cities.

6. Discussion: Use of Force and Duty to Intervene Policies

J. Pinkham introduced the subject of policies that are not up for review, but that are always in practice. Chief Lamothe discussed the local policies. He explained that the Use of Force policy is statewide and mandated by the state of Vermont, so that every department is following the same policy. He explained that the state policy includes one small section called "Duty to Intervene," and that the SAPD also has a standalone "Duty to Intervene" policy that they implemented several years ago. It means that whenever an officer, on or off duty, sees a fellow officer violating a person's rights, they have a duty to intervene. If they don't intervene, they are considered just as guilty as the person perpetrating the offense.

7. Discussion of posted arrest and race data

J. Pinkham introduced the topic and said someone in the public raised a question about arrest data and numbers. She explained that the data is available online on the SAPD website. It is an annual report. Chief Lamothe said it's a little more in-depth to do it more frequently, but the public data is available annually. Chief Lamothe said the state doesn't mandate keeping records of race for arrests, just traffic stops and tickets. However, the SAPD does keep those records.

J. Pinkham shared current data (2021) from the SAPD website, and the group looked closer at the numbers of arrests and the breakdown by race. Chief Lamothe said there were 30 arrests of BIPOC, and he broke down every arrest and explained why the person was arrested. 27 were externally generated (someone called), 3 were traffic stops.

J. Pinkham opened the conversation up for questions from the Board. M. White asked if the 30 people were local residents. Chief Lamothe said he doesn't know because that information isn't tracked as part of the arrest records.

W. Wilkinson said she wondered the same thing, whether or not the arrests were residents. Chief Lamothe explained that of the 30 arrests, 22 were the same person.

J. Pinkham asked how many calls phoned into the department do not end in arrest. Chief Lamothe said the average number of calls is around 12,000 annually. As of 9.27.22, the number is almost 8,000, which means there are far more calls than arrests. J. Pinkham asked if any of the events that led to arrests involved white people and if the arrests were equal. Chief Lamothe explained a few different situations where Black and White people were both present and both were arrested, including large-scale fights and fights with weapons.

Chief Lamothe said they can't control what they are called to, but they do have a "Fair and Impartial Policing Policy," designed to help officers know the rules of engagement in everyone they deal with. He

explained that if a caller says, "I don't like the looks of someone" and their call is race related, they don't respond to it and ignore the calls. If a person calls and there is a suggestion that the call is related to race, they have a conversation with them and do not respond.

W. Wilkinson said these are teachable moments for people in the community.

8. Update on new member status

J. Pinkham presented an update. M. Neabar has applied to be a new member. The application is currently held up in City Council over a question of residency. J. Pinkham is hopeful that the process is smooth and moves along quickly.

9. Update on Embedded Crisis Clinician & Safety Roster

J. Pinkham introduced the subject and asked Chief Lamothe for an update. He explained that the Safety Roster has been well-received by the community and there has been a lot of buy-in from local residents.

Chief Lamothe said the Department has received a lot of applications for the Embedded Crisis Clinician role but none of the interviews have panned out, and there hasn't been any luck finding someone yet. He explained that he is being very picky about who they hire, and they want to right fit.

W. Wilkinson asked the Chief if drug related and mental health calls have been higher lately. Chief Lamothe said it's higher than ever and he's seen elevated numbers for the past two years. He said every day, the majority of the calls are related to drugs and mental health concerns.

10. Public Comment

M. Neabar said he thinks the PAB is necessary for the community and he's looking forward to seeing what the future holds for this group.

J. Pinkham mentioned that the meetings might be moving to every other month. Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 2022.

K. Lukens shared that the State's Attorney candidates are meeting for a forum at St. Albans City Hall on Wednesday, 10.5.22

11. Adjourn

W. Wilkinson made a motion to adjourn. Second by J. Nicholls. Meeting adjourned at 6:05 PM.