

MINUTES
ST. ALBANS POLICE ADVISORY BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
ST. ALBANS CITY HALL, 100 NORTH MAIN STREET
5:00 PM TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2023

DRAFT

Board Members Present: Marcus Neabar, Chair; Melinda White, Vice Chair; Danielle Lindley Mitchell (Via Zoom); Kris Lukens;

Board Members Absent: John Nicholls; Winnie Wilkinson;

City Staff present: Paul Clapps, Minute Taker; Police Chief Lamothe; Lt. Wetherby

Members of the public present: None

1. M. Neabar called the meeting to order at 5:02.

2. Agenda Introduction and Review.

3. Public Comment on Items Not on Agenda

- No Public Comment

4. Mission Review

- 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.*

5. Consider Approval of Meeting Minutes

- **D. Mitchell motioned to approve the minutes from 5/23/23, 6/27/23, and 9/26/23. Seconded by M. White. The motion passed with all in favor. There was no discussion.**

- **K. Lukens joined the meeting at 5:05.**

6. Community Events - Lt. Wetherby

- M. Neabar introduced Lt. Wetherby as he began the discussion on community events.
- The relationship between the officers and business owners has grown exponentially due to recent changes. Lt. Wetherby mentioned that seeing more officers around the city either posted or moving around has led to more one-on-one interactions, conversations, and more positive community involvement.
- Lt. Wetherby listed off other departmental changes that have been received positively (like cards that notify community members when their property has been visited by an officer, with a contact number included).

- Lt. Wetherby also mentioned that a (Speed Spy) speed monitor has been installed that only monitors speed and date/time to find trends of when people speed and where.
- M. White mentioned that it sounds like there's increased communication between the department and the community, which has been used positively. M. White had personally seen a difference in the past two years at least.
- M. Neabar noted that as the community interaction increases, so too will trust and communication. When officers are "approachable" it becomes easier to engage with law enforcement.
- M. White mentioned that there was even recently a film project done by an organization that was impressed by how community-oriented the St. Albans Police Department was.
- M. Neabar added that it's important for a community to know what's actually happening. These things can sometimes be missed by local or national media.
- Lt. Wetherby reminded the board and public that there's a First Responders Chili Cook-Off on 10/26, and all the funds will be donated to Martha's Kitchen.

7. SAPD Update - Chief Lamothe

- M. Neabar moved onto the SAPD Update. Chief Lamothe gave an overview on staffing trends as well as open positions for uniformed officers. Chief Lamothe specifically mentioned that the department has 20 staff, and a "dream team" would be 26 officers.
- Chief Lamothe and the board commended Ed, the new mental health specialist who has started working on weekends.
- Certain closings (like detox closing and the end of the housing voucher program) have negatively impacted the police department and the community as a whole.
- Chief Lamothe gave an update on yearly "Use of Force" data, as well as some trends. Many of these "Use of Force" instances involved mental health, intoxication, warrants for arrest, and domestic violence. No internal investigations were started on any of these claims, since they all seem to be conducted correctly.
- Chief Lamothe specifically mentioned that mental health instances make up a lot of their calls currently. Also, due to staffing changes, there could be much fewer internal affairs this year than there were last year.

8. No Public Comment

9. K. Lukens motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:57. Seconded by M. White. The motion passed with all in favor. There was no discussion.