

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 19th day of June 2024, City Hall – Auditorium, 1 Wellington Street, Stratford ON

PRESENT: Tim Doherty (Chair), Steve Cousins, Harjinder Nijjar, Martin Ritsma, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Mark Taylor, Councillor Rob Edney (St. Marys), Brad Rickert (Radio Cab), Gail Cossey (Aunt Gail's Taxi) via phone, Casey Riehl (Executive Assistant)

MINUTES

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

2. Adoption of the June 19, 2024 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

Motion by Steve Cousins | Martin Ritsma

THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of June 19, 2024 be adopted as presented. Carried

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None declared.

4. Adoption of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of May 15, 2024

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Steve Cousins

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of May 15, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

5. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

5.1 Taxi Fare Increase Request – Gail Cossey/Brad Rickert

Gail Cossey addressed the Board and requested an increase in the current fares charged by the Stratford taxi companies. Ms. Cossey has put forth the request that the Board consider raising the fares from \$14.00 per ride to \$16.00 per ride and for Seniors (65+) raising the fare from \$13.00 to \$15.00 per ride. Citing the rising costs to operate their businesses, the upcoming increase in the minimum wage and the fact that the taxi tariffs have only increased a total of \$5.00 over the last twelve years for the reasons for the requested increase.

Brad Rickert addressed the Board and reiterated that he does not feel the purpose of the Police Service Board is to interfere with free enterprise in the City of Stratford. The taxi companies are run by individuals, not the City. It was his understanding that, originally, the Board was to oversee the safety aspects of the taxi businesses. Not to interfere with the business aspect of

running their businesses. No other private business is regulated in the City as to how it operates from the business aspect of it, except the taxi companies. He does agree that the taxi companies should work together and operate on the same level as far as rates go. The last three times the taxi companies have requested rate increases from the Board, the Board came back and approved one dollar less than the requested amount.

Mr. Rickert would like to see the taxi by-law changed to only include the safety regulations, not what rates can be charged.

Chief Skinner stated that there are a number of municipalities across Ontario that have rewritten their by-law with respect to taxi services in their municipalities. There are a number of Police Services and Police Service Boards that have extricated themselves from the approval process of taxi's and put it back to the City. The Chief has discussed this option in the past with Mr. Rickert, and if this is something that the taxi companies would be interested in moving forward with now. It would require the support and collaboration of the taxi companies to re-write the by-law. The Board may want to look at if it is timely to review the by-law in its entirety and re-write it with the taxi owners and City of Stratford staff, which could possibly exclude Schedule D fare limitations that are currently included in the by-law. Mr. Rickert clarified that it is his opinion that the by-law states that the Board regulates the fares within the by-law, so that everyone is on the same playing field. It does not state that the Board decides what the rates are going to be.

Steve Cousins stated that the role of the Board is the governance of the Police Service and supporting them in community needs such as the safety and security of citizens when it comes to taxi companies. The idea that other municipalities are looking at alternative ways of approaching this is something Stratford could look into.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Steve Cousins

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board supports the request in principle from the taxi operators to increase the fares from \$14.00/ride to \$16.00 per ride, and increase the senior fare from \$13.00/ride to \$15.00/ride, with all other rates to remain the same;

AND THAT the fare increase will be posted publicly for feedback prior to the next Police Service Board meeting scheduled for September 18, 2024, when the Board will vote to amend the by-law with the requested fare increases. Carried

The Board will request an upcoming review of the taxi by-law with the Clerk's Office and Chief Skinner.

Brad Rickert and Gail Cossey no longer present at the meeting at 5:09 p.m.

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 Update on Stratford Police Station

Chief Skinner reported that the reassignment of work locations within the 17 George Street station have now been completed. Victim Services now have workspace and support staff on site five days per week. The Courts are enhancing their video coverage as part of their security plan and are looking for space for a monitoring room, however there is no room available in the building to accommodate this request. They continue to work with the Courts to enhance their security of the Courthouses at both 100 St. Patrick Street and 1 Huron Street as both are now returning to in-person appearances and trials.

789 Erie Street is fully administratively functional and are just awaiting signage for the building and on Erie Street.

6.2 PSB Policy Review – Approval of Policies

Dave Preston has started providing the Board with updated policies to review. Tim Doherty will contact Mr. Preston to clarify the process once the Board has reviewed the amended current policies as well as any new policies. If needed, a special Board meeting could be held to approve the policies prior to the next scheduled meeting in September.

7. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports and Crime Stoppers Report – May 2024

Board members received the statistical reports for May 2024. Inspector Taylor reviewed the reports with the Board with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and was available for questions.

7.1 Stratford

- (1688) calls for service
- (279) charges laid
- Drug offences were up with (13) occurrences. There were two search warrants carried out and a significant amount of drugs were seized, as well as vehicles and cash. Street value of the drugs seized were \$90,000.00 and \$64,000.00.
- (87) mental health related calls, up from the previous month (77).
- (45) domestic related occurrences, up from the previous month (33), however down significantly from May 2023 (79).

7.2 St Marys

- (230) calls for services
- (30) charges laid

- (5) mental health related calls, down from (9) last month
- (7) domestic related occurrences, up from (3) last month

7.3 Perth South

- (236) calls for service
- (134) charges laid

Motion by Steve Cousins | Martin Ritsma

THAT the Monthly Statistical Reports for May 2024 be received as presented. Carried

7.4 Crime Stoppers Report (May 2024)

Chief Skinner reviewed the May 2024 Crime Stoppers Report:

- (25) total calls received by the Huron Perth County Crime Stoppers
- (9) calls specific to the Stratford Police Service – all calls were intelligence related.
- (176) YTD calls
- Top tips by type: Warrants (5), Drugs (4), Provincial Statutes (3)

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Steve Cousins

THAT the May 2024 Crime Stoppers report be received as presented. Carried

Chief Skinner reminded the Board that as of September 2024, the Stratford Police Service will be taking on the Huron Perth Crime Stoppers coordination responsibilities. The O.P.P. have previously been doing the coordinating and reporting.

8. Approval of Monthly Accounts (May 2024)

Chief Skinner reported that the budget is at 41.67% at the end of May. The Service is currently spending on average \$1,182,000.00 per month. At this rate, this will put them at a 2.5% deficit by year end. Chief Skinner does anticipate that most of the deficit will be eliminated once all of the grant and reserve account contributions are reconciled. In May, they saw a surplus of \$37,500.00, so they are beginning to see the end of the one-time costs associated with the move to 789 Erie Street that was impacting the budget. There will still be some costs to absorb, such as signage, however all the large costs have been realized. Most line items are at or below the 41.67% you would expect them to be at. The part-time salaries and benefits lines are both over mainly due to the part-time communication centre staff working to cover maternity leaves.

MOTION by Martin Ritsma | Steve Cousins

That the monthly accounts for May 2024 be approved as presented. Carried

9. Police Association Business

None noted.

10. Public Complaints

Chief Skinner reported that there was one new complaint forwarded by the Law Enforcement Complaints Association for investigation. The investigators have made numerous attempts to contact the complainant without success. If the investigator is unable to contact or locate the complainant, the complaint will return to LECA for filing.

There was a second complaint that was initiated on April 2, 2024 that has been withdrawn by the complainant after it was determined that the complaint was a service complaint, not a conduct complaint. The primary issue for the complainant was the transfer of and sharing of information between shifts or platoons within the communication centre. The Civilian Records Manager has put a process in place that will detail any significant calls for service and be shared at a shift briefing with the communication centre so there is a turnover of information for the next shift.

11. Correspondence

None noted.

12. Consent Items

12.1 **Motion by** Harjinder Nijjar | Steve Cousins

THAT on the recommendation of the Chief of Police, Mulugeta AYENEW (Radio Cab) and Matthew Brian MORRISON (City Cab) be approved for taxi licenses.

Carried.

13. New Business

None noted.

14. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting

Motion by Steve Cousins | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the meeting adjourn to an In-Camera session to discuss personal matters about identifiable individuals, to reconvene in open session if required. Carried

The meeting adjourned to In-Camera at 5:28 p.m.