

# **STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD**

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 19th day of March 2025, Stratford Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Room, 353 McCarthy Road W., Stratford ON

**PRESENT:** Steve Cousins – Vice-Chair, Martin Ritsma, Harjinder Nijjar, Dave Gaffney, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Jason Clarke, Hank Zehr – Zone 5 Police Service Advisor, Councillor Rob Edney – Town of St. Marys, Tia Petrie, Casey Riehl – Executive Assistant, Members of the Media, Members of the Public

## **MINUTES**

### **1. Call to order**

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

### **2. Adoption of the March 19, 2025 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items**

**Motion by** Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of March 19, 2025 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 January 15, 2025.**

**Motion by** Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of January 15, 2025 be adopted as printed. Carried**

### **5. Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

#### **5.1 Police Station Update**

Inspector Clarke updated members that the ramp work at the front entrance of 17 George Street was completed last month. However, the ramp is not in use as they are waiting for a final inspection from the City and contractor. The front entrance is open now for those who can enter via the stairs.

The replacement of the front entrance doors are still outstanding and no date has been scheduled yet.

All previous issues that Inspector Clarke reported at the January meeting have been taken care of and no other issues have arisen. The elevator is now up and running.

## **6. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (January/February 2025)**

Board members received the statistical reports for January and February 2025. Inspector Clarke reviewed the reports with the Board with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and was available for questions.

### **6.1 Stratford – January 2025**

- (1425) calls for service
- (300) charges laid
- (62) M/H related calls
- (1) suicide, (3) O/D
- (45) domestic related occurrences
- (6) assaults
- (3) sexual offences
- (41) fraud occurrences
- (4) drug offences, (3) impaired by alcohol, (1) impaired by drug
- (78) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: no currently validated permit (28)

### **Stratford – February 2025**

- (1373) calls for service
- (381) charges laid
- (61) M/H related calls
- (3) suicides, (1) O/D
- (31) domestic related occurrences
- (4) assaults
- Frauds dropped to (19) from (41) in January following an arrest
- (4) drug offences, (1) impaired by alcohol, (2) impaired by drug
- (62) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: no currently validated permit (22)

### **6.2 St. Marys – January 2025**

- (137) calls for service
- (28) charges laid
- (6) M/H related reports
- No suicides or O/D
- (2) domestic related occurrences
- (1) drug offence, (1) impaired by alcohol
- (8) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: speeding (4)

### **St. Marys – February 2025**

- (168) calls for service
- (50) charges laid

- (4) M/H related reports
- No suicides or O/D
- (7) domestic related occurrences
- (1) drug offence
- (12) MVC's
- Top e-ticket issued: no currently validated permit (9)

### **6.3 Perth South – January 2025**

- (130) calls for service
- (39) charges laid
- (2) M/H related calls
- No suicides or O/D
- No domestic related occurrences
- (1) impaired by alcohol charge
- (10) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: speeding (18)

### **Perth South – February 2025**

- (121) calls for service
- (73) charges laid
- (5) M/H related reports
- No suicides or O/D
- (1) domestic related occurrence
- (1) impaired by alcohol offence
- (3) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: speeding (25)

**Motion by** Harjinder Nijjar | Dave Gaffney

**THAT the Monthly Statistical Reports for January and February 2025 be received as presented. Carried**

### **6.4 Crime Stoppers Report (January 2025)**

Chief Skinner reported that there were (38) new calls that came into Huron-Perth Crime Stoppers during the month. (9) were Stratford Police tips – (2) drug related, (7) intelligence related.

Top tips by type were drug-related (8), other criminal code (5), weapons (4) and fraud (4).

**Motion by** Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

**THAT the Crime Stoppers Report for January 2025 be received as presented. Carried**

## **7. Approval of Monthly Accounts (As of February 28, 2025)**

Chief Skinner reported that they have met with the Director of Corporate Services to discuss the 2024 budget numbers and the possibility of being in a deficit situation. They recognize that there may still be revenue and expenses that need to be accounted for in 2024 but are not yet included in the 2024 budget. They are confident that reconciliation, which includes grant money and reserve funds transferred, will be able to offset the deficit and cover off most, if not all, of the short falls. The Director of Corporate Services is willing to attend a future PSB meeting, preferably before the 2026 budget deliberations, to speak with the Board about financial processes and give some insight into financial options that may be available for any future expenditures.

The financial statement included with the agenda does not have a budgeted amount per line item included. Chief Skinner anticipates that these figures will be available for the next meeting.

Salaries, which account for approximately 88% of the overall police budget for 2025 are included in the package for the first two months of the year. So far \$2,011,000.00 has been spent in January and February on salaries and overtime, which includes a 3-pay month and payout entitlements for 2024. They would expect to have spent 17% of the salaries and overtime budgets by the end of February, and they are currently sitting at 17.5%.

Absences and mandatory annual training for all sworn officers that started in January and will end in April, will continue to affect the bottom line over the next couple of months.

Some recent hires may curtail overtime expenditures after April, as those new recruits complete their initial probationary period and are able to patrol on their own and count towards the minimum compliment numbers to staff the platoons.

The Service continues to look at cost containment issues, which include expansion of the community resource unit, which allows them to enhance the office availability at peak calls for service times. Restructuring this will support more front line capacity and visibility.

**MOTION by** Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

**That the monthly accounts for February 2025 be approved as presented.  
Carried**

## **8. Police Association Business**

None to report.

## **9. Public Complaints**

Chief Skinner reported that the LECA report on the annual overview for public complaints relating to the Stratford Police Service in 2024 is not yet available and will distribute it as soon as it is posted.

Since the January 2025 meeting LECA has managed (3) complaints for the Stratford Service. (2) of the complaints were deemed frivolous and were screened out by LECA. A third complaint was referred back to the Service for investigation and that complaint is currently under review. During the past two-month period, (3) investigative files were completed and all (3) were deemed unsubstantiated by the investigating officer. The complainants have all been advised and LECA has been provided with the investigative reports and the Chief's decision letters supporting the findings that all are unsubstantiated. The complainants will have an opportunity to file a request of the Chief's decision to LECA. If the complainants do not request a review, then the files will be closed.

## **10. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations**

### **10.1 Tia Petrie – Taxi/Limousine By-Law & the Police Board Obligation to Govern Taxi Companies in the City of Stratford**

Tia Petria addressed the Board to discuss her previous and current experiences with local taxi companies. After moving to Stratford, she noticed that the local taxi's do not have meters in their vehicles and charge flat rates within the city. She also noticed the lack of Uber availability. You could download and open the app, however there were no drivers available. Her interpretation of the City's by-law is that using Uber in Stratford is in contravention of the taxi by-law. Ms. Petrie has heard from many people what she believes to be misinformation; that Ubers are unsafe, drivers are not insured to carry passengers, drivers are not required to complete criminal record checks, etc.

Ms. Petrie feels that Stratford is behind in using digital rideshare technology. Some points she raised about Uber:

- Uber is not a taxi or limousine company by definition. Operating under the current taxi by-law operations is not applicable, as they are a driver for hire;
- Uber drivers must be at least 21 years old, hold a valid G license for at least three years;
- submit criminal record checks, drivers abstracts;
- vehicles must be less than 10 years old, complete an annual safety test at a registered mechanic who will provide the results directly to Uber;
- drivers must hold their own valid insurance, with a \$2 million passenger liability commercial insurance plan;

- drivers must complete customized training programs on all legalities, rules, regulations, responsibilities and expectations while working as an Uber driver;
- As of 2025, drivers are required to have their own GST number for tax filing purposes;
- Drivers must keep detailed reports from each trip and it is mandatory to provide the police with any of these reports upon request.

Ms. Petrie stated that many other municipalities are amending their taxi by-laws to include digital rideshare technology. She added that in Section A-48 of Stratford's Transportation Master Plan, updated in November 2023, that it states, "promote emerging transportation technologies through outreach and marketing, ensuring that residents are educated about the benefits and potential impacts, including safety, of new mobility options". "Staff will be educating and promoting new options to the general population in Stratford. The plan will continually be reviewed to maintain consistency with updating and the flow of change."

In a thriving City like Stratford, hosting over a million visitors each year, she believes Uber should be accepted in Stratford and the current by-law amended to reflect rideshare and mobile technology should be given a high priority.

Dave Gaffney suggested that this issue be raised at City Council, as they are the ones who make the by-laws, not the Police Board. Martin Ritsma suggested that Ms. Petrie contact the City Clerk to begin the process of being a delegation at Council to discuss this issue.

Ms. Petrie has asked the Board to review local taxi companies who have now banned her due to her social media posts promoting Uber. Steve Cousins stated that it is the Boards duty to approve the taxi licenses on a recommendation from the Chief of Police.

Chief Skinner clarified that the City writes and amends the by-law. The Police Service Board and Police Service enforce the by-law and have administrative oversight of the by-law, they do not write it. In some cases, they can have some input into the rewriting of the by-law. Until that happens, the by-law stands as the by-law is now. With regard to the treatment of Ms. Petrie by an individual taxi company owner or driver, he is not aware of the specifics, but in order to be referred to the police it would need to be a criminal incident or another statute incident that was being alleged that would fall within their mandate. Chief Skinner will look into the allegations further.

Ms. Petrie and Uber drivers are no longer present at the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

**11. Correspondence**

None noted.

**12. Consent Items**

None noted.

**13. New Business**

13.1 Request to Change Locations for Board Meetings

**Motion by** Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

**THAT the Stratford Police Service Board continue to meet at the Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Room for all future monthly meetings. Carried**

Staff will inquire on the availability of the Mansbridge Room for the remaining 2025 meetings.

**14. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting**

**Motion by** Martin Ritsma | Dave Gaffney

**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 5:17 p.m.

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Steve Cousins, Vice-Chair