

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 25th day of June 2025, Stratford Rotary Complex – Mansbridge Rm., 353 McCarthy Road W., Stratford ON

PRESENT: Steve Cousins – Chair, Martin Ritsma, Harjinder Nijjar, Chief Greg Skinner, Inspector Jason Clarke, Inspector Mark Taylor, Sergeant Rob McMillan – Stratford Police Association, Hank Zehr – Zone 5 Police Service Advisor, Councillor Rob Edney – Town of St. Marys, Kerry McLean, Shelly Smith, Brett Robinson, Casey Riehl – Executive Assistant

MINUTES

1. Call to order

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

Steve Cousins asked for a moment of silence to recognize the passing of member Dave Gaffney.

2. Adoption of the June 25, 2025 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of June 25, 2025 be adopted as presented with the addition of the following New Business:

- **Update on Annual Status Report – Chief Skinner**
- **Request for Approval for GovAI – Chief Skinner**
- **Update on Council's Appointment of a Citizen SPB Rep – Martin Ritsma**

Carried

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None declared.

4. Adoption of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of May 21, 2025.

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Martin Ritsma

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of May 21, 2025 be adopted as printed. Carried

5. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

- 5.1 Delegation: Request for Reward for the Derek Ritz Case – Kerry McLean, Shelly Smith, Brett Robinson

Shelly Smith addressed the Board regarding the importance of offering a reward for the one outstanding missing person case in Stratford to finally have witnesses come forward.

Brett Robinson - Director of Case Analysis, Please Bring Me Home, introduced himself and explained what the volunteers at Please Bring Me Home do to assist in solving missing persons cases. Their team works very closely with the police to investigate cases. Please Bring Me Home has been working on the Derek Ritz case since 2019, after Mr. Ritz disappeared from Sebringville on January 1, 2017.

Kerry McLean – Director, Please Bring Me Home, joined the team in 2019 when they received the Derek Ritz case. At this time, the organization is approaching the Board with a request of a minimal award amount. Mr. Ritz went missing under difficult circumstances and his case has gone unsolved, despite extensive efforts by the police, Please Bring Me Home volunteers and Mr. Ritz's family and friends.

Ms. McLean stated that the importance of offering a reward would significantly enhance the search for Derek Ritz. Getting public involvement could potentially assist in getting answers. There is motivation through incentives, and hopefully a reward will financially motivate witnesses to finally come forward. Historically, in conjunction with the police, a case would be referred to Crime Stoppers and they would take that case and issue a reward. Unfortunately, there has been a significant decline in Crime Stoppers rewards. Information is required to come in from people in the Stratford area and beyond that will lead investigators to the evidence that they need in this case.

If a reward was to be offered, it would need to have strict criteria and be qualified information based on specific information that they provide. Established standards can be set by the Police Service and the Board ahead of time. The reward would only be payable with successful charges, convictions and/or location of Derek Ritz.

Chief Skinner explained that the case was originally investigated by the OPP, as it was in their jurisdiction, however the Stratford police assumed Perth South in November 2018 as their jurisdiction and took over the investigation.

Steve Cousins inquired if Kerry McLean has any stats on the efficacy value of rewards as incentivization. Ms. McLean will investigate stats.

Steve Cousins thanked representatives for addressing the Board with their request and providing information.

Kerry McLean, Shelly Smith and Brett Robinson are no longer present at the meeting at 5:01 p.m.

6. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

6.1 Police Station Update

Inspector Clarke reported that there were no new updates for 17 George Street. Inspector Clarke will be meeting on July 2, 2025 with the firm that will be completing the feasibility study. The anticipated length of time to complete the reports is within three months. Inspector Clarke may have the full report to provide to the Board by the September Board meeting.

6.2 Review and Approval of SPSB Policy GP-022 – Political Activity

Dave Preston has provided the Board with a draft policy regarding Political Activity for their review.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board approves Policy GP-022 – Political Activity as presented at the June 25, 2025 meeting. Carried

This policy will be included with the policies to be posted on the website.

7. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (May 2025)

Board members received the statistical reports for May 2025. 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 – May 2025

- (1567) calls for service
- (288) charges laid
- (4) youth charged, (9) diverted
- (68) M/H related calls
- No suicides or O/D's
- (69) domestic related occurrences, (14) resulted in charges
- (6) assaults
- (4) sexual offences
- (29) mischief calls
- (32) theft under calls
- (7) drug offences, (3) impaired by alcohol, (0) impaired by drugs
- (42) MVC's
- Top E-tickets issued: speeding (49), no currently validated permit (35)

7.2 St. Marys – May 2025

- (182) calls for service
- (27) charges laid

- (0) youth charged, (1) diverted
- (8) M/H related reports
- No suicides or O/D's
- (11) domestic related occurrences, no charges laid
- (2) sexual offences
- (4) fraud calls
- No drug offences, no impaired by alcohol or drug charges
- (4) MVC's
- Top E-ticket issued: speeding (6)

7.3 Perth South – May 2025

- (144) calls for service
- (89) charges laid
- No youth charged or diverted
- No M/H related calls
- No suicides or O/D's
- (1) domestic related occurrence, did not result in a charge
- No violent crimes reported
- (3) fraud calls
- No drug or alcohol crime
- Top E-ticket issued: speeding (38)

Inspector Clarke explained the new dashboard that is now available to provide additional data. For example, they can track trends of occurrence call counts, which are rated into six different categories and broken down by percentages. 2025 trends are relatively on track with the trends dating back to 2021.

Chief Skinner reviewed the 2024 year in review which looks at clearance rates. In the past, the service could measure their violent crime and property crime clearance rates with other municipalities, provincial averages and national averages. Now there is a crime severity index for crimes against persons and crimes against property. Each individual call type has a weighted average to it, which works well for Statistic Canada, however, it makes it difficult for the police service to decipher the information into a manageable report. Staff has broken down the information for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South for 2024 for the purpose of bench-marking to determine success in the future. Stratford is within range compared to provincial and federal statistics. These statistics are outlined in the report provided.

7.4 Crime Stoppers Reports (April & May 2025)

Chief Skinner reviewed the following for the April and May 2025 Crime Stoppers Reports:

April 2025

(59) Total calls to Huron-Perth County Crime Stoppers
(20) Calls specifically to Stratford Police – (2) were drug related, (18) were intelligence related

Top Tips by Type in April: Theft (17), HTA (9), Other CC (8)

May 2025

(52) Total calls to Huron-Perth County Crime Stoppers
(28) Calls specifically to Stratford Police – (2) were drug related, (26) were intelligence related

Top Tips by Type in May: HTA (16), Other CC (11), Drugs (8)

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the Monthly Statistical Reports for May 2025 and the April 2025 and May 2025 Crime Stoppers Reports be received as presented. Carried

8. Approval of Monthly Accounts (As of May 31, 2025)

Chief Skinner reported that as of the end of May, the Service would expect to have spent 41.7% of their allocated annual budget. They are currently sitting now with an actual expenditure equating to 37.7%, currently running at an annualized surplus of approximately \$1.5 million. On a monthly basis they are spending an average of \$1.2 million, which is up over last months averages, but still \$127,000.00 less than the monthly budgeted average. A large part of the positive variance is due to unspent salary dollars, resulting from long term illness/injury absences, gapping of positions after retirements, and other leaves that are not fully funded.

As noted on the last page of the financial reports, the Service is overspent in the areas of office expenses, conference expenses, training, services and projects, and interest and equipment leases. The Chief will research what is driving those expenses and make sure that those lines are adequately resourced in the next budget cycle as costs continue to rise.

They are also tracking the costs relating to the implementation of the new Community Safety in Policing Act. There have been a number of items related to upgraded equipment and mental health training that is mandatory under the new legislation and attributes to net new costs for the Service. As these costs are incurred to maintain compliance with the legislation, they are tracking them to identify them in the 2026 budget process for transparency.

MOTION by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

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

9. Police Association Business

Sergeant Rob McMillan, Stratford Police Association President, read a prepared document to the Board on behalf of the Association Members expressing the concerns of the membership regarding the current direction and leadership of the Stratford Police Service. Specifically, organizational restructuring concerning the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Sergeant McMillan will distribute copies of the letter to each Board member.

Steve Cousins thanked Sergeant McMillan and will receive the formal letter from the Association.

10. Public Complaints

Chief Skinner reported that for the month of May there were (2) new complaints which were screened out as not being in the public interest to move to investigation.

There were (2) previous complaint investigations closed, in both cases there was insufficient evidence to suggest that there was any misconduct on the part of the involved officers.

There was (1) previous complaint, that after discussion with LECA, they have agreed to turn the investigation over to the OPP, because of the Chief's involvement, as he met with the complainant prior to the complaint being initiated. Because of the attempts to resolve the issue, which now comprise part of the complaint, LECA deemed it was best to refer the file to an outside agency for investigation.

11. Correspondence

None noted.

12. Consent Items

12.1 Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT on the recommendation of the Chief of Police, Gurwinder SINGH (City Cab Inc.) and Daniel Francis CLARKE (Aunt Gail's Taxi) be approved for taxi licenses;

AND THAT Harkawal Deep SINGH be approved for an Uber license.

Carried

13. New Business

13.1 2024 Annual Report

Chief Skinner reported that the 2024 Annual Report is now complete and is in the process of being uploaded to the website for public access. As per the new CSPA, Police Services are required to have their annual reports published on the website by the end of June each year. Stratford will be compliant with that legislation.

13.2 Request for Approval for GovAI

Chief Skinner has met with the City's Chief Technology and Security Officer, Naeem Khan, to discuss implementing artificial intelligence in the Police Service. There has been a great deal of research completed regarding various AI providers in the market and Stratford has approved the implementation GovAI for City employees. Security, versatility and access control to private information were the biggest advantages to GovAI compared to other platforms. Other Police Services are moving towards AI, with Windsor, York and Vancouver being the latest additions. The implementation of GovAI would begin in September 2025 for the remainder of the year at a cost of approximately \$7,875.00.

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Martin Ritsma

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board supports the contracting of GovAI as the service provider, in the amount of \$7,875.00, for the implementation of artificial intelligence into the Stratford Police Service for 2025. Carried

Steve Cousins suggested a possible on-boarding session in the future to familiarize Board members with GovAI and how the Service will be using it.

13.3 Update on Board Membership

Martin Ritsma reported that the vacant community representative position, who is appointed by Council, will be advertised by the City Clerk.

Mr. Ritsma spoke to MPP Matthew Rae who stated that the vacant Provincial appointee position would be filled in the near future.

14. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Martin Ritsma

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 5:49 p.m.

The meeting reconvened to Open Session at 6:15 p.m.

15. Reward for the Missing Person Case of Derek Ritz

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

That the Stratford Police Service Board Directs Chief Skinner to move forward with offering a \$10,000.00 reward for information leading to a conviction in the missing person case of Derek Ritz;

AND THAT the Chief follows any Board policies relating to rewards.

Carried.

16. Adjournment

Motion by Harjinder Nijjar | Martin Ritsma

THAT the June 25, 2025 Police Service Board meeting adjourn.

The meeting adjourned 6:21 p.m.

Steve Cousins, Chair

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