

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICE BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Service Board was held on the 15th day of January 2025, City Hall – Auditorium, 1 Wellington Street, Stratford ON

PRESENT: Tim Doherty (Chair), Martin Ritsma, Harjinder Nijjar, Dave Gaffney, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Mark Taylor, Sergeant Rob McMillan (Stratford Police Association), Casey Riehl (Executive Assistant), Hank Zehr, Members of the Media

MINUTES

1. Call to order

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

Tim Doherty introduced Hank Zehr, the newly appointed Zone 5 Police Service Advisor.

2. Adoption of the January 15, 2025 Agenda and Addition of Agenda Items

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the agenda for the regular meeting of January 15, 2025 be adopted as presented. Carried

3. Election of 2025 Chair and Vice-Chair

The Executive Assistant assumed the role of the Chair for the purposes of an election. Pursuant to the *Police Services Act*, the Board is required to elect a Chair at its first meeting each year.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

That Tim Doherty be nominated as Chair of the Stratford Police Service Board for the year 2025.

No further nominations were received.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

THAT nominations for the 2025 Stratford Police Service Board Chair be closed.

Carried

Tim Doherty agreed to let his name stand.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

That Tim Doherty be elected as Chair of the Stratford Police Service Board for the year 2025.

Carried

Pursuant to the *Police Services Act*, the Board may elect a Vice-chair at its first meeting each year.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

That Steve Cousins be nominated as Vice-chair of the Stratford Police Service Board for the year 2025.

Carried.

No further nominations were received.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

THAT nominations for the 2025 Stratford Police Service Board Vice-Chair be closed.

Carried

Steve Cousins indicated in writing that he agrees to let his name stand if nominated for vice-chair.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

That Steve Cousins be elected as Vice-chair of the Stratford Police Service Board for the year 2025.

Carried

The meeting was turned over to recently re-elected Chair, Tim Doherty.

4. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

None declared.

5. Adoption of the Minutes from the Regular Meeting of December 11, 2024

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the minutes of the regular meeting of December 11, 2024 be adopted as printed. Carried

6. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

None noted.

7. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

7.1 Police Station Update

Inspector Jason Clarke reported that the work is ongoing at the front entrance of George Street where the new accessible ramp is being installed.

The new stairs and pad have been poured, bringing the landing up so it is even with the door now. The St. Patrick Street entrance is now open after completing tile work in that area. All previous leaks in the roof have now been repaired. The roof work is now complete and all the scaffolding is down.

The Building Committee has met twice to discuss wants and needs in moving the Service versus remaining at the current location. The Committee is also meeting with the City's Director of Infrastructure Services and the Community Facilities Manager about renovations and an addition at 17 George Street.

Members are preparing drawings and renderings that can be shared with the Board at a future meeting.

Tim Doherty noted that discussions regarding the state of the police station have been ongoing for many years. A Briefing Note was prepared by the former Board Chair in 2020 requesting a comprehensive overview of the building, the lease with the Courts, the high risk areas of the building in an attempt to start the discussion around if there was any provincial or federal funding available for municipal infrastructure, specifically a police building. Chief Skinner stated he is not aware that a presentation was ever made to Council. The Chief has met with the City's CAO, who indicated that the Service should put a business case together with an options paper. The options paper, once approved by the Board, should be presented to Sub-committee or Council for discussion and referral back to staff for review.

Tim Doherty inquired if there were any funding options available for a project such as this? Chief Skinner stated that there are grants available, however they will need to be shovel ready. Once they are at this point, and the City has agreed to fund the project, they can look for partners to come on board and defray some of those costs.

Chief Skinner will aim to have a business case before the Board within the next two months. Should the Board choose to pass a motion in support of the business case, it can proceed to Sub-committee or Council. The business case could include renderings of a new building and also one for a retrofit of the existing building.

7.2 Approval of Board Policies

Dave Preston has been contracted to review and complete updates of the Stratford Police and Stratford Police Board Policies to remain compliant under the *Police Services Act*. Copies of the amended and new policies were

provided to Deputy Chief Foster and each of the Board members for final review.

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT the Stratford Police Service Board approves the following updated policies in accordance with the *Police Services Act*:

- **Administration and Infrastructure (AI-001SPSB – AI-017SPSB)**
- **Crime Prevention (CP-001SPSB – CP-002SPSB)**
- **Emergency Response (ER-001SPSB – ER-010SPSB)**
- **Law Enforcement (LE-001SPSB – LE-047SPSB)**
- **Public Order Maintenance (PO-001SPSB – PO-003SPSB)**
- **Victim’s Assistance (VA-001SPSB)**
- **Counter Terrorism (CT-001SPSB – CT-004SPSB)**
- **General Policies (GP-001 – GP-018)**

Carried

8. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports (December 2024)

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

8.1 Stratford

- (1285) calls for service
- (278) charges laid
- No hate/bias incidents reported
- (53) M/H related calls
- (2) suicide occurrences
- (2) O/D occurrences
- (36) domestic related occurrences
- (4) assaults
- No robberies reported
- (2) sex offences
- (1) auto theft
- (3) B&E’s
- (18) frauds
- (12) theft under
- (2) drug offences
- (3) impaired offences
- (66) MVC’s

8.2 St. Marys

- (134) calls for service
- (35) charges laid
- No hate/bias incidents reported
- No M/H related calls
- No suicide occurrences
- No O/D occurrences
- (7) domestic related occurrences
- (2) assaults
- No robberies reported
- (2) sex offences
- No auto thefts reported
- (1) B&E
- (2) frauds
- (2) theft under
- No drug offences
- (1) impaired
- (11) MVC's

8.3 Perth South

- (92) calls for service
- (21) charges laid
- No hate/bias incidents reported
- No M/H related calls
- No suicide or O/D calls
- No domestic related occurrences
- No assaults or robberies reported
- (1) sex offence
- No auto thefts reported
- (1) B&E
- (3) frauds
- No theft under
- No drug offences
- (1) impaired
- (12) MVC's

Inspector Clarke noted that in 2025, the SPS averaged (51) calls per day in Stratford and (7) calls per day for St. Marys/Perth South.

Martin Ritsma commented that with the number of mental health calls the police are called to, the MCRT program is more important than ever. Mayor Ritsma has met with MPP Matthew Rae to again stress the importance of this program and ask him to be an advocate for the SPS at the next level. Inspector Clarke stated that there is another call for grant applications for

MCRT funding that is due by January 26, 2025 and the SPS will once again submit an application. This grant is specifically for police services who have had an MCRT program up and running.

Chief Skinner noted that the stats reflected in the monthly reports are the primary call for service. What you are not seeing is all of the other calls for service that have a mental health aspect to it. This is why the MCRT program is so important, to help identify mental health behaviors and indicators and then proactively assist them.

Inspector Clarke reported that 86% of the calls that MCRT attends with an officer, are able to divert people from going to the hospital. They can offer community support or whatever type of assistance they deem necessary. For the remainder of the people who are transported to the hospital, 70% of them are being admitted to the hospital.

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Harjinder Nijjar

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

8.4 Crime Stoppers Reports (November/December 2024)

Chief Skinner reported January is Crime Stoppers Month and there has been a lot of media attention showing the value of the Crime Stoppers program to Police Services across the province.

November 2024 Report – (34) new calls came into Huron-Perth Crime Stoppers during the month. (17) were Stratford Police tips – (4) drug related, (13) intelligence related. Top tips by type were drug-related (8), warrants (5), provincial statutes (4).

December 2024 Report – (29) new calls came into Huron-Perth Crime Stoppers during the month. (10) were Stratford Police tips – (3) drug related, (7) intelligence related. Top tips by type were drug-related (9), breaches (3), thefts (3).

Motion by Martin Ritsma | Dave Gaffney

THAT the Crime Stoppers Reports for November and December 2024 be received as presented. Carried

9. Approval of Monthly Accounts (As of December 31, 2024)

Chief Skinner reviewed the preliminary accounting of the revenue and expenditures for 2024. The reconciliation process continues into January 2025 as invoices and revenue continue to be accounted for. He expects the final 2024 budget details may be slightly different from today's report once all the reconciliations are completed.

96% of the salary budget allocation has been spent, which is derived from the total base salaries and payroll premiums. Payroll premiums are at 141%, which is a direct result of staffing issues such as overtime callouts to cover absences, acting supervisor premiums, supervisors on long term leave, increases in part time coverage and overtime in the comm centre to cover primarily parental leaves. The trend toward the increasing need to cover off staffing levels to ensure community and officer safety with overtime has the effect of causing additional stress and burnout on existing staff with increased use of both short term and long term sick leave. From 2022 to 2024 there has been a 57% increase in payroll premium expenditures, which is predominantly from overtime hours worked. Additional funding for frontline constables should result in a reduction of overtime hours in 2025. In 2025 they will be looking at internal restructuring options that will seek to reallocate existing salary dollars from within the base budget allocation to redeploy to hire additional frontline constables to address the staffing situation.

For operating expenses, one of the largest expenses is legal fees, which is currently sitting at 370% over budget. The hope is that 2024 is an anomaly, but many departments within the City and other police services, are seeing similar increases as more people initiate legal processes against the police service.

Special projects and equipment purchases overages are related to costs in 2024 for the final renovations, equipment purchases and moving costs associated with the startup of 789 Erie Street. There may be an opportunity to offset some of these costs from existing reserve funds to balance this piece of the budget.

As the Service continues to rotate people through specialty positions to provide officers with development opportunities, there is a legislative requirement to have them trained in all facets of the new position. One senior member was sent to the Rotman Leadership Development course as part of the executive succession leadership plan and strategy.

Lease expenses are overspent by 30% due to the delay of the move to 789 Erie Street and having to continue to pay rent at 154 Downie Street as well as 789 Erie Street for the first few months of 2024. This is a non-reoccurring situation.

The Ontario Grants line of the budget is \$502,000.00 short of the anticipated grant amount. The Ontario Government works on a fiscal year From April 1 – March 31, the hope is some of that short fall will be recovered in the first quarter of 2025, which through the city's reconciliation process will impact the final budget position for the year.

MOTION by Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

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

10. Police Association Business

None to report.

11. 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 at the next Board meeting.

The previous complaint that LECA had assigned to the Waterloo Regional Police Service for investigation has been resolved by way of a withdrawal of the complaint by the complainant. This file is now closed and there will be no further action required.

A complaint investigation that alleged officer misconduct in September 2024 was resolved by way of a withdrawal by the complainant on December 20, 2024. The complainant followed up the written withdrawal with a phone call to Chief Skinner apologizing for making allegations and thanking the officers for their support and compassion during the investigation of her criminal complaint.

A complaint was investigated that alleged that officers committed misconduct in September 2024. This was also resolved by way of a withdrawal by the complainant on December 19, 2024. There were criminal charges by the courts involving a third party to the complaint and once those charges were resolved, the complainant no longer wished to pursue any investigation of the misconduct allegations against the officers.

A complaint investigation alleging officer misconduct was completed in late November with a finding of insufficient evidence to substantiate the allegations. The complainant and LECA were notified of the outcome of the investigation and Chief Skinner is currently waiting to see if the complainant is going to request a review of his decision before closing the file.

A complaint investigation alleging officer misconduct was initiated in September 2024 and finalized in December 2024. The result of the investigation is the allegations of the complaint were unsubstantiated. The complainant and LECA were notified of that decision and Chief Skinner received documentation this morning indicating that the complainant has requested a review of Chief Skinner's decision by LECA. Once the review is completed, he will advise the Board of the outcome.

There was one Special Investigation Unit investigation from August 2024 where an accused in police custody suffered injuries requiring medical attention while in the cell. The incident met the legislative requirement to notify the SIU. The SIU invoked their mandate and commenced a criminal investigation. One SPS officer was identified as the subject officer and three officers were identified as witness officers. On December 18, 2024, the SIU completed their investigation and the Director found that there was no commission of a criminal offence by officers.

12. Correspondence

None noted.

13. Consent Items

13.1 Motion by Dave Gaffney | Harjinder Nijjar

THAT on the recommendation of the Deputy Chief of Police, the Stratford Police Service Board approves Matthew Brian CONROY (City Cab Inc.) for a taxi license. Carried.

14. New Business

14.1 Approval of 2025 OAPSB Membership Fee (51-100 Members)

Motion by Dave Gaffney | Martin Ritsma

THAT the Stratford Police Services Board pays \$5,085.00 to renew their annual Ontario Association of Police Service Boards membership for 2025. Carried

14.2 Ride Share Complaints in Stratford

Chief Skinner reported that there have been an increasing amount of complaints regarding ride share organizations operating outside of the taxi by-law. The Stratford Police Service is in the process of reviewing those concerns and verifying if in fact ride share services are operating. Some charges have been laid against taxi operators that have been operating within the city outside of the by-law. They have been charged accordingly. Chief Skinner has asked Mike Beitz and Darren Fisher to prepare a joint media release detailing how members of the public can identify licensed taxi operators and the risks associated with going into a ride share that is unlicensed.

14.3 MCERT Funding

Martin Ritsma reported that he has had a conversation with MPP Matthew Rae, and with the pre-budget consultation with the provincial government, he did advance the case that the municipality is not going to have funds from the province to support municipalities with regards to the police budget. There was funding granted to municipalities served by the OPP, however, Stratford is not one of those municipalities. It would be beneficial

that municipalities not supported by the OPP were equally supported by the provincial government.

15. Adjournment to In-Camera Meeting

Motion by Martin Ritsma | 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 5:18 p.m.

cr

Tim Doherty - Chair