

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICES BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Services Board was held on the 23rd day of September, 2020 at 4:30 pm, by video conference (Zoom).

PRESENT: Dan Mathieson (Chair), Graham Bunting, Steve Cousins, Tim Doherty, Rosemary Tanner, Chief Greg Skinner, Deputy Chief Gerry Foster, Inspector Jason Clarke, Inspector Mark Taylor, Constable Rob McMillan (Police Association) and Pat Shantz – Executive Assistant.

MINUTES

1. Call to order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m and welcomed Steve Cousins from St Marys who was appointed to the Board by the Province on August 17th, 2020.

2. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof.

3. Adoption of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 24th, 2020

MOTION by Graham Bunting | Tim Doherty

That the minutes of the regular meeting of June 24th, 2020, be adopted as presented. Carried.

4. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

There were no hearings of deputations or presentations.

5. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

5.1 Light Armoured Vehicle

The Chief advised that a transfer agreement has been signed with the London Police Service and the vehicle will be received at no cost to the Stratford Police Service. Four officers are scheduled to receive their DZ licensing which is required for operating the vehicle at a total cost of \$2,500.

5.2 Correspondence Updates

Basic Constable Training - Jeremy Deckert and Zachary Goodhew have graduated from OPC and are now on the road as probationary police officers.

Promotional Exams - Of the nine officers who wrote promotional exams, eight members passed and did well on the exams.

5.3 Mobile Rapid Response Unit

The Chief advised that Macgregor Austin-Olen will be attending the Board meeting in October to make a presentation. Although Macgregor was riding along with the Stratford Police Service for five days per week due to COVID and social distancing, his hours have now changed and he has returned to riding with the OPP for three days per week.

6. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports – June, July & August 2020

6.1 Inspector Clarke reviewed the individual Statistical Reports with the Board for June, July and August 2020, with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and answered questions.

He advised that overall, numbers continue to rise as the public gets out and about more. Domestic violence occurrences have increased, particularly in the month of August along with driving while impaired charges. Mental health calls for service remain steady with a spike since COVID and are becoming the number one call for service. There have been more thefts from vehicles and sheds during the summer months along with mischief occurrences.

There were three sexual assaults in Perth South for the month of August with two charges and one being investigated.

Tim Doherty found that e-tickets and traffic stops have decreased significantly from the previous year. Inspector Clarke advised that due to COVID, officers have been interacting less with people unless they became aware of a violation that needed to be addressed. However, they have been slowly ramping back up to regular numbers.

6.2 The Chief reviewed the Crime Stoppers Report for June, July and August for Stratford. In June there was 1 drug and 10 intelligence tips, in July there were 8 intelligence tips received and in August there were 4 drug related tips and 8 intelligence tips.

MOTION by Rosemary Tanner | Graham Bunting
That the Monthly Statistic Reports for June, July and August 2020 be received. Carried.

7. Approval of Monthly Accounts

The Chief reviewed the monthly accounts with the Board as of August 31st and advised that as of the end of the month, 68% of the budget has been used.

To date, approximately \$137,000 has been spent on COVID related expenditures which were unanticipated and not included in the budget.

The Chief highlighted the accounts that are currently over budget and provided an explanation.

Motion by Steve Cousins | Rosemary Tanner
That the monthly accounts for June, July and August 2020, be approved for payment. Carried.

8. Police Association Business

There was no Police Association business for the Board.

Tim Doherty asked for Constable McMillan's thoughts around Foot Patrol and Body Worn Cameras. Constable McMillan advised that the Association has no issues with Foot Patrol being given higher priority. Regarding Body Worn Cameras, he had advised that through discussions between the Association and the Police Association of Ontario, more likely than not, we will see them come to Stratford and officers should be prepared to have them. He has advised the administration that his only concern is that should there be an internal investigation undertaken, the Body Worn Cameras only be accessed to look at specific incidents and not simply viewed to see what an officer was generally doing on a shift. Chief Skinner assured him that that would not happen.

9. Public Complaints

The Chief advised that there have been 5 public complaints over the 3-month period of June, July and August.

- A complaint alleging that the police failed to adequately investigate a fraud. The complaint was screened out (not referred to investigation) by the OIRPD as the complainant was not affected by the alleged conduct of the officers.
- A complainant alleged that a female officer harassed, stalked and almost assaulted him at three local parking lots. The complaint was investigated and deemed unsubstantiated. The complainant has subsequently made a request to the OIRPD for a review of the investigation. The Chief is still waiting for the outcome of that review.
- A complaint was received involving a "slightly unmarked police car" that was gold in colour that allegedly sped past another vehicle without activating its lights and sirens. This complaint was also screened out by the OIRPD.
- A complaint was received regarding an officer who was allegedly disrespectful, intimidating and confrontational during a phone conversation. The incident involved a family dispute involving adults and the Mobile Rapid Response Team and Domestic Violence Investigator were engaged to ensure that everyone was safe and that there were no victims to be concerned with. The investigative report is currently awaiting the Chief's review and sign off and has been deemed unsubstantiated.
- A complainant alleges that from January 2017 to May 2020, he has been slandered, harassed and refused service by officers but no identity was provide for SPS officers. Due to the amount of complaints received by this individual, unless the complainant can narrow down the time frame, identify officers or specifically identify an incident, he cannot assign it to investigation. The Chief added that 3 of the complaints set out are from the same individual.

10. Correspondence

The Chief answered questions from the Board, however, due to the large amount of correspondence, the Chief advised that if anyone has any further questions, he would be happy to answer them after the meeting.

11. Consent Items

There were no consent items to discuss.

12. New Business

12.1 New Employee Background Investigation

The Chief advised that following the internal investigation involving a workplace harassment complaint previously reported to the Board, it was recommended that background investigations be done externally. A process has been put in place whereby all new employees, both civilian and sworn, will have a complete background investigation done by an outside consultant. A one year agreement has been entered into with Mike Guilford who is an experienced background investigator. He is currently working on five background investigations – one for an experienced officer and four for special constables.

12.2 Address Suppression Program

The Chief advised that officers have expressed concerns for their health and safety due to threats of serious bodily harm or damage to property or harm to family members from individuals in custody and out of custody. It was requested to consider an Address Suppression Program to enhance the safety of the members. The program would enable officers to have their vehicles registered to the address of the police station rather than their home address. It could also be done for their mailing address. There will be strict guidelines in place with a verified, credible threat of serious bodily harm or death to enter into the program. Many other services have this program in place.

12.3 Taxi By-law Review

The Chief would like to request a review of the current Taxi By-law. They are currently looking at modernizing the administration of new and renewed taxi licences and looking at an electronic process. There have been a number of legislative and industry changes that have occurred that should be incorporated into our by-law, such as ride sharing, accessibility and customer service requirements.

The Chief set out other issues that have occurred with taxi companies and licencing and would like to improve the wording of the by-law. He would like the Board's approval to review the by-law, make recommendations for amendments and collaborate with St Marys in the process and engage a solicitor to review any recommendations that are made.

MOTION by Rosemary Tanner | Graham Bunting

That Chief Skinner proceed with a review of the current taxi by-law, make recommendations for amendments, collaborate with St Marys in the process and engage a solicitor to review any recommendations that are made. Carried.

12.4 Annual Business Plan

The Chief advised that there hasn't been an annual report since 2016, and he is currently working on a report that will include 2017, 2018 and 2019. Following this report, they will move to a one-year report beginning with 2020. The Chief is planning to provide a draft report to the Board at the next meeting.

13. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on October 28th, 2020.

14. Adjournment

Motion by Tim Doherty | Graham Bunting

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 at 5:50 pm.

"Dan Mathieson"

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Dan Mathieson - Chair