

STRATFORD POLICE SERVICES BOARD

A meeting of the Stratford Police Services Board was held on the 17th day of March, 2021, held in the Auditorium, City Hall.

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, Rachelle Willows (Police Association) and Pat Shantz – Executive Assistant.

MINUTES

1. Call to order

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

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 February 17th, 2021

MOTION by Graham Bunting | Rosemary Tanner

That the minutes of the regular meeting of February 17th, 2021, be adopted as presented. Carried.

4. Hearings of Deputations and Presentations

Retirement plaques were presented to Tony Burrows and Patrick Kelly. Tony joined the Stratford Police Service on June 28th, 1999, after serving with the Guelph Police Service for 13 years. He retired on June 30th, 2019. Patrick Kelly was a Special Constable with the Service from March 14th, 2011, until his retirement on March 31st, 2021.

5. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

5.1 Ceremonial Unit

The Chief advised that following discussions and issues raised at the last Board meeting, he met with Constable Oliva who proposed the Ceremonial Unit, and it was decided to revisit the proposal in September.

6. Receipt of Monthly Statistical Reports – February 2021

Inspector Clarke reviewed the Statistical Reports with the Board for February with respect to Stratford, St. Marys and Perth South and answered questions.

6.1 Stratford

There were 1187 calls for service, 71 e-tickets were issued and 47 warnings were given. Mental health calls were down slightly from last month and motor vehicle collisions have increased along with hit and runs.

6.2 St Marys

There were 184 calls for service, 41 e-tickets were issued and 15 warnings were given. Mental health calls decreased from 10 in February to 3 in March.

6.3 Perth South

There were 109 calls for service, 25 e-tickets were issued and 6 warnings were given.

Inspector Clarke added that the pandemic is still affecting the month to month statistics.

MOTION by Steve Cousins | Tim Doherty

That the Monthly Statistic Reports for February 2021 be received. Carried.

7. Approval of Monthly Accounts

The Chief advised that he had no concerns regarding the accounts for February and advised that the expenditures are down 14% compared to this time last year.

He noted that the cost of fuel is up, however, the consumption is down due to the use of hybrid vehicles.

MOTION by Graham Bunting | Rosemary Tanner

That the monthly accounts for February 2021 be approved for payment. Carried.

8. Community Equity Action Team (CEAT)

Tim Doherty provided an update regarding CEAT and advised that Creedence has completed their interviews with representatives from various groups in the community and collected surveys.

There is some confusion in the community as there are other surveys taking place such as the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and the County's anti-racism initiative. Participants feel that they are being asked the same questions twice and their concerns are being addressed on an individual basis.

By broadening their scope and the number of groups being contacted, many of the groups have their own reasons and situations they would like brought forward. They are trying to find a balance and build trust with the police, but at the same time provide the groups an opportunity to address their needs.

The Chief added that he feels that Creedence is on track and that it will be a positive program once it is up and running. Patience is needed as we want to ensure we have the correct structure, format, scope, and people around the table in order to have a change in service delivery that's positive.

Tim added that they haven't been able to connect with leadership from the Muslim community and its important to hear from them.

MOTION by Tim Doherty | Graham Bunting

To receive the update regarding the Community Equity Action Team. Carried.

9. Police Association Business

There was no Police Association business to report.

10. Public Complaints

The Chief advised that no new complaints have been received.

Regarding the public complaint received in June 2020 involving an injury received during an altercation with an individual, the Service had to stand down the public complaint investigation until the SIU conducted their criminal investigation. That investigation has concluded and there was no basis for any criminality. There were four officers under investigation and the complaint involved improper arrest, excessive use of force and insulting language. All were thoroughly investigated and found to be unsubstantiated. The matter is now closed with the Service and will go to the OIRPD for their review.

A public complaint from January 7th where the complainant alleged being accused by officers without evidence. The complaint was against two officers for discreditable conduct. The investigation has been completed and found to be unsubstantiated due to insufficient evidence. It will now go to the OIRPD for review.

11. Correspondence

The Chief advised that the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police has been lobbying the Provincial government to move front line officers up for COVID vaccines because of the work they do in the community including administering first aid. They have now been moved up to Phase 1 and are in the process of being vaccinated along with Special Constables who deal with prisoners and the public. Administration staff remains in Phase 2.

Upon a question regarding mandatory vaccines, the Chief advised that they cannot make them mandatory. They are simply providing officers with the opportunity. He added that although officers are vaccinated, they are still expected to use PPE that has been assigned to them as the virus can still be transferred from someone who has received the vaccine.

12. Consent Items

12.1 Taxi Licensing

The Chief advised that they have re-started licensing taxi drivers. He added that there are currently over 100 licensed drivers in the City and he has been encouraging taxi business owners to recruit from the unactive drivers, and they have been able to re-license some.

13. New Business

13.1 Court Security Review

The Chief advised that through the Efficiency Grant process administered by the City, he asked that consideration be given to fund a review of the Court Security Program.

The Board has the legislative responsibility to provide court security for all court buildings within the municipality. Through a series of court security committee meetings, input was sought from the committee members on changes to the court security service delivery model which would expand beyond court room security to include broader building security and include lobby areas and parking lots during the hours that court is in session. Since those initial discussions and the request for grant money to conduct the review, there has been a change in the landscape with the courts as they have gone to virtual delivery which changes their security needs. The Ministry of the Attorney General has also put private security in place to deal with COVID screening.

The Chief would like to seek the approval of the Board to request that the terms of reference for the grant money (\$50,000) be expanded to include a review of the entirety of the Special Constables duties including prisoner security and transportation. The Chief feels that it would be important to have a fulsome review of all the tasks assigned to Special Constables, and their roles and responsibilities need to be brought up to today's standard and environment within the Police Service.

MOTION by Rosemary Tanner | Steve Cousins

To expand the scope of the Efficiency Grant with the City to include building security and broader security issues around Court justice and the Police Service. Carried.

13.2 Alternative Court

The Chief advised that Alternative Court is also commonly referred to as Mental Health or Therapeutic Courts and he is providing this update for the Board's information.

The Human Service and Justice Co-ordinating Committee is currently looking at making a proposal to implement an Alternative Court in Stratford that will hear all criminal matters where the accused has a significant mental health or addiction issue, and where more diversion strategies can be put in place to focus on treatment rather than punishment. There are a number of Alternative Courts currently in operation in Ontario including Woodstock and St. Thomas which are both geographically and demographically similar to Stratford. The intention is to have an afternoon of court time specifically dedicated and staffed to support accused persons to recommend alternative outcomes to incarceration.

Providing the right social service supports with a focus on trauma informed practices when dealing with people with mental health and addiction issues in conflict with the law should contribute to better outcomes and build public trust in the system.

As well, it meshes quite nicely with the work that the Community Equity Action Team hopes to achieve. There has been a number of initiatives that the police service has put in place over the last couple of years that are progressive and positive and this adds to our supportive response to mental health and addiction issues within the community.

13.3 Tip of the Month

The Chief advised that he has been hearing from the community that there is a need for better communication from the Police Service. A program has been created called "Questions for Cops" and the questions will be submitted through traditional media or social media and will be thematic to a "Tip of the Month". It is hoped to learn more about the problems in the community and it also gives the Service the opportunity to educate the community on the law, police procedures and policies.

13.4 Policy Manual

The Chair advised that the current Policy Manual is in need of being updated and in order to have a consultant do the work, the cost would be approximately \$5,000 over a three-month period. The money is currently in the Board's budget. The Board, Chief and Deputy Chief will be consulted and a presentation will be made to the Board.

MOTION by Steve Cousins | Tim Doherty

That the Police Manual for the Police Services Board be updated by a consultant at a cost of \$5,000 plus GST. Carried.

14. Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021, at 4:30 pm.

15. Adjournment

Motion by Rosemary Tanner | 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 5:20 pm.

"Dan Mathieson"

Dan Mathieson - Chair ps