

Public Safety Committee Meeting January 21, 2021

The Public Safety Committee met Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 6:00 pm via Zoom Conferencing in the Conference Room at City Hall, 17 S. 8th. Present were Committee Members Ken Gardner, Elizabeth Patten, Kathy Wilcox and Austin Lott. Also present were: Police Chief Doug Colombik, Fire Captain Eddy Kanduch, Fire Captain Jake Richards, Fire Captain Taran Harbaugh, Fire Lt Casey Miller, Fire Chief Branden Stevens, Council Member Rick Huber, AC/CE Officer Mark Winkley and HR Officer/Recorder Linda Wilkins.

Chairperson Lott called the meeting to order.

1. Election of Committee Chairperson

***Committee Member Gardner moved to nominate Committee Member Patten as committee chairperson, seconded by Committee Member Lott.*

Committee Member Patten accepted the nomination and was willing and able to take on the responsibility.

***On roll call vote the motion passed, 4-0.*

2. Request of Citizens

Chief Stevens wanted to keep the Public Safety aware of staffing and concerns with the Fire Department. Calls are currently at an unprecedented level; administrative duties are behind, staff is burnt out and overtime is high not only due to the call volume, but one staff member is on Military Leave, one member is recovering from recent surgery, there has been a vacant position, and a number of members have vacation that must be used or it will be lost. A staff of 19 full time employees and 25 part paid firefighters would cover the current call volume. Eleven out of town transfers have been turned away and the issue is staffing. Another ambulance service is looking at coming to Miles City to take all out of town transfers at the hospital, in the Chief's opinion if the out of town transfers were lost it would result in a huge deficit in the budget. Committee Member Gardener asked if another ambulance service came to Miles City if this would take pressure off of the department. Chief Stevens explained that the revenue that comes for transfers helps to pay for 911 services that are billed, but may not be paid. Committee Member Wilcox thought it would be good to preserve our relationship with Holy Rosary and asked if a contract would be appropriate. Chief Steven's said that it could be a double edge sword, it could leave the county and city without an ambulance for emergency calls. He has asked the hospital what would fix the current situation as he has received complaints from citizens. Chairperson Patten stated she would place the ambulance service transfer issues and the concerns of the citizens on an upcoming agenda.

Chief Stevens also addressed the condition of the Fire Department building and will be having the City Building Inspector look at the building and will report back to the committee. Chairperson Patten will be placing this subject on an upcoming agenda.

3. Committee Member Comments.

None

4. Discussion and recommendation regarding MCPD Use of Force Policy.

Chief Colombik commented that in July 2020 President Trump ordered new wording be added to law enforcement agencies use of force policy. City Attorney Rice has reviewed the information. The wording is as follows:

Purpose: The purpose is to provide policy guidelines on the reasonable use of force by officers and to

ensure that this agency's use of force policies adhere to all existing applicable federal, state, and local laws.

The use of a choke hold, which is a physical maneuver or technique that restricts an individual's ability to breathe for the purpose of incapacitation, is prohibited unless deadly use of force is authorized.

***Committee Member Lott moved to recommend to Council the change to the MCPD Use of Force Policy as recommend by Chief Colombik, seconded by Committee Member Wilcox and **passed** unanimously 4-0.*

5. Discussion and recommendation regarding animal shelter services cost increases.

The cost of animal care has raised significantly and Jean Lindley, DVM would like to continue to provide shelter animal services to the city, but there will be an increased cost. To cover the additional costs, it was discussed that the adoption fee for an animal be increased so adoptive parents are bearing more of the cost. MCA 7-23-4202 requires prior to adoption of a cat or dog they must either be spayed or neutered; or a deposit must be obtained from the person adopting an animal and a spay or neuter certificate will be provided for such services. Currently the fiscal impact of animal control services is significant. Officer Winkley has reached out to the other Miles City vet and has not received a reply as to whether they would be willing to provide vet services and the cost. He has also reached out to Help for Homeless Pets in Billings they would be willing to take animals for a fee of \$25/per animal. Custer County Funds for Animals has been providing the City with some assistance with stray animals, and have offered to transport animals to Billings should the City decide on using Help for Homeless Pets. After discussion, it was decided further information was required.

***Committee Member Lott moved to postpone for further information, seconded by Committee Member Wilcox and **passed** unanimously 4-0.*

6. Discussion and recommendation regarding new police patch.

Chief Colombik said that the younger officers would like to portray a new image for the Police Department; and thought a new patch promoting the cowboy image of Miles City would be appropriate. He presented a patch designed by Sgt. Sheets. Committee Member Lott asked Chief Colombik to convey the committees' appreciation. Chairperson Patten thought the patch brings elements of Miles City together in a positive manner.

***Committee Member Gardner moved to present the new patch to council and obtain feedback from the community, seconded by Committee Member Lott and **passed** unanimously 4-0.*

7. Adjournment

***Committee Member Lott moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Committee Member Gardner and **passed** unanimously, 4-0.*

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

Chairperson Elizabeth Patten

Recorder Linda Wilkins