

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall Council Chambers
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, July 19, 2022
4:14 p.m.

PRESENT: Raymond M. Morriss, President; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Joseph George (via Zoom), and Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey Silka, City Administrator; Marjorie Woodring, City Clerk; Mark Gandolfi, City Comptroller; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Shannon Adams, Fire Chief; Brooke Cassell, Public Works Operations Manager;

Greg Larry, Cumberland Times-News

I. AGENDA REVIEW

Mr. Silka asked if anyone had any issues with the agenda that they wanted clarified.

Councilman Cioni asked about Casey Smith, dba ServicePro regarding the grass-mowing Order Nos. 27042 and 27043, and if his company was local. Mr. Silka advised that they are local, they were the low bidder, and have been doing the mowing for the City for several years.

Councilman Frazier inquired if he would need to abstain from Order No. 27045. Mr. Silka advised that there was no conflict.

II. DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES - PUBLIC WORKS

Brooke Cassell, Public Works Operations Manager, provided handouts as well as a PowerPoint presentation, and advised on spring and summer operations, which involve repairs to streets and sidewalks, street sweeping, tree and brush work, mowing, and hydrant flushing.

Ms. Cassell reviewed completed and ongoing projects, including Fayette Street water main, Decatur Street water main, Public Works building IT room, City Hall Conference Room and upgrades to Giarritta Park. She also reviewed work done by the Sewer Department and Street Department.

Ms. Cassell provided information for upcoming projects, which include locating sewer main, taps, and service lines for Avondale Avenue, along with a water line upgrade there; Flood Control work involving seepage control boxes, removing debris from the flood channel and inspecting flow outlets; building a new office in the Engineering Department, and upgrades to Constitution Park and the Mason Rec Sports Complex.

Ms. Cassell reviewed staffing updates, advising that they have hired 2 new employees at Streets and Public Properties, with 2 open positions remaining. She also advised that the Sewer Department has 1 open position, with all other departments fully staffed.

Ms. Cassell provided an equipment update, advising that the Sewer Department received a new cameral van, and that the Street Department received a new F550 Dump Truck with plow and spreader, replacing the 2008 vehicle.

III. POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Police Chief Chuck Ternent provided a PowerPoint presentation detailing the department's 2022 statistics and reviewed the main topics. He advised that overall, the department is doing pretty well, and went over crime statistics in a comparison from 2021 to 2022. He said the bottom line is that crime is down pretty significantly. He advised that arrests are up a little bit from last year, and said traffic enforcement is down a little bit. The Chief also reviewed drug arrests and overdose data, and discussed mental health issues, comparing Covid years with pre-Covid years, and said the City is still a bit below the pre-Covid mental health incidents. He added that overdoses are down significantly.

Chief Ternent advised on personnel and staffing, and said sworn manpower is currently at 46 out of 51 allocations, with 5 sworn openings, which he said with training and sick-leave, etc., there are actually 40 out of 51 officers on the street right now. He said there's still a personnel problem going on, especially with 80 calls a day. He discussed recruitment and retention, and advised that they have been actively promoting their advertising and publicizing recruitment incentives. Captain Jim Burt, CPD Administrative Services, stated that the lack of recruits is not unique to Cumberland, it's all over, and said it has become an epidemic for law enforcement in America.

The Chief moved on to vehicles, advising that their equipment and fleet has never looked better, and repair costs have gone way down. He said as of right now, they are only 11 vehicles away from every officer getting a car.

Chief Ternent touched on their special units, which are Canine, Swat Team (CERT), SRO, C3I, ACNTF, CNT, Clandestine (meth) Lab, and Accident Reconstruction. He stated that 2 of the canines are imprinted for marijuana, and said if the new law is passed, they will have to retire them and figure out what to do with them. He advised that CERT is down to 6 operators, which is not enough, and explained that on several occasions they would have to call State Police in to help. He added that the department needs more narcotics detectives.

There was discussion about the recent tragedy in Texas, and if current response plans have been reviewed with other units in the state. Chief Ternent advised that the in-house policy is to go straight in and find and kill the bad guy, and added that the FBI has trained them in ALERT STYLE. He added that they have done live training at ACM, and stated that they do have a policy review annually.

The Chief discussed National Night Out planned for August 2nd, Kids Camp, and the August Baker new memorial ceremony at Greenmount Cemetery.

Chief Ternent explained that as Covid restrictions have lifted, there are more events, which puts stress on the department's manpower. He said he has to order people to come out and work events sometimes, which creates morale problems.

There was discussion about community groups and community policing, and the Neighborhood Advisory Commission that the City once had. He stated that now there are no community groups operating in the City. He said people are trying to get some started up here and there, and said he

thinks it's important to reach out to the community. He suggested that whatever M&CC can do to get some groups restarted would be appreciated.

The Chief discussed body cameras, and said they have a county-wide committee to working on that, and said Captain Burt is heading that up for the CPD. He said they have been looking at quotes, and stated that body-cams need to be in place by 2025. He discussed funding and grants for purchasing, and also suggested maybe partnering with the County. He added that it's an expense that will have to be made eventually.

Chief Ternent discussed new legislation and new disciplinary laws going into effect, as well as new physical fitness testing. He also mentioned a new juvenile law in effect that is an issue.

He talked about new community boards being established by the County for any complaints, that will tell the department how to discipline. He also mentioned new ARPA patrol remodels to help isolate prisoners from officers.

The Chief discussed personal cell phone issues, and advised that the States Attorney warns that all officers need work cell phones. He stated that it will cost about \$2000/month for everyone right now.

He also discussed a new report management system, which has a policy reporting system attached, and said the County is allowing them to use it for free, and maybe switch over from the old system. He said the consensus is to stay with the old system, due to issues with interaction and transfer of data.

IV. FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Chief Adams provided a handout, and stated that for the CFD, it has been a busy and hectic year. He advised on personnel, and said they are down 2 positions, with 3 off for long-term illness. He advised that Covid has not been an issue in their department since February 2022. He stated that there are 16 per shift along with 4 daylight personnel, and said they will be adding a new Deputy Chief next Monday, to bridge the gap between training, vehicle maintenance, etc. He said as far as stats, their numbers are in correlation with the CPD. He said in 2021, Covid gave them a lot of calls.

He discussed the multiple incidents of arson over the past several weeks, and said all investigations have been closed out and arrests have been made.

Chief Adams discussed vehicles, and advised on the new Ladder Truck, new Command Unit, and a new Fire Marshal Unit (in service waiting to be lettered). He advised that the old Fire Chief vehicle is being changed over to Car 3.

There was discussion on recruits and testing, with the Chief advising that 1 new recruit just finished training and has started with the crew. He stated that the testing on May 21st had 13 people applying, with 8 showing up and 6 passing the test. He said they are currently conducting medical exams and background checks.

The Chief advised on 2 recent promotions – Steve Grogg promoted to Deputy Chief, and Steve Adams promoted to Equipment Operator. He talked about training, saying that 8 have completed Fire Officer 2 training, and 2 have completed Fire Officer 3 training. He stated that driver training has been continuous, getting younger members cleared to drive fire apparatus.

He discussed Instructor Training at the academy, and said 5 members are currently in the process, which takes almost 2 years to become MICRB certified. He said this is a current issue for their department. He also discussed Special Operations Training.

Chief Adams talked about their new Fire Reporting system, started January 2022, and said there have been no issues. He added that the EMS Reporting system is on tablets now to streamline patient care reporting, and advised that there are no issues with this either.

The Chief discussed officer standards and response policies. He advised that the CFD officers exceed the standard set by the County. He stated that their response policy is having a minimum of 3 people on engine/truck on structure calls. As an update, he stated that they implemented this concept on June 1, 222 with minor issues at first, but everything is worked out and running smoothly.

V. UPDATE FROM CITY ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Silka advised that the MPA is not trending in a good direction, and discussed revenue issues. He added that the equipment is coming out of service and won't be supported anymore, so basically the software is dead. He stated that they are at the point that they're harvesting parts from non-critical areas to make the machinery work.

He discussed complaints about parking zones/areas, and said they are looking at fees, fines and enforcement. He said that probably in a month or two their team will come back with a comprehensive recommendation. He added that in order to capture revenue, the City needs the right technology, and said they are looking at partners like the CPPDA in order to standardize hardware.

There was discussion about the George Street Garage, and if there were improvements from the renovations. Mr. Silka stated that the problem is the equipment not working consistently. He said this will be part of their team's recommendation.

There was discussion about a decline in parking due to more people working from home. Mr. Silka stated that it is down; less people are coming in, and said they need to revise their expectations.

There was discussion about the cost of staff and equipment. Mr. Silka stated that he didn't have a number off the top of his head, but said that it's a significant amount considering it's a small department because of equipment costs.

Free parking downtown was discussed. Mr. Silka advised that's something you don't want to do, because there will be residents and employees taking up the spaces. He added that pay-to-park works to circulate people through, and said if it were free, parking expenses would have to be subsidized out of the GF.

Mr. Silka advised about the evaluation process for employees, and said it is being revamped to be more narrative, subjective and interactive. He added that it sets up goals and gives people a more impactful evaluation, that also focuses on a more "interactive through the year" approach to employee management.

He advised that an action plan for employees with consistent problems - not quite disciplinary - has been introduced, just to get them to the level of expectation for their positions. He added that it's a proactive way to set people up for success.

Mr. Silka discussed working on a grant for the skatepark from the National Foundation of Skate Parks. He advised that it will be in by the end of the week, and if they choose the project to go to the next level they will take a more comprehensive evaluation. He said if the grant is received it will help offset the cost of the project.

Mr. Silka advised that on a personal note, he was elected secretary for MCCMA, and stated that it's a 4-year process to get to president.

VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN DISCUSSION

Mr. Silka reviewed the Plan that was presented in a work session last week. With the CEDC asking for M&CC to adopt the plan, Mr. Silka asked if they had had a chance to read the Plan, and called for any questions or concerns.

Mr. Silka stated that his take on it is that there is a lot of information that doesn't apply and said there is a lot of consultant-based fluff and said it doesn't give any strategic economic development action. He stated that it read more like a CEDC wish-list, and said its main goals are the same as on the MOU. He added that if it is adopted it would need to be used with interaction between the City and the CEDC for an implementation plan. He added further that it's a good starting-off plan, but said it needs to develop an action plan on how to go about this.

Mayor Morriss agreed, and said as far as "strategic," it's pretty basic – just an upgrade of the strategic plan they had before. He also stated that there needs to be a serious conversation about the staffing that is recommended in the Plan. He added that what's needed now are discussions between the City and the CEDC.

Mr. Silka advised that he will probably set up a standing meeting with Mr. Miller, so that they all don't find out about the projects through emails which he said will make for more information sharing and strategic thinking.

Council agreed that would be a great idea. Mr. Silka said it will start in a couple of weeks.

There was discussion on recommendations for the Grant Writer position. Mr. Silka stated that he has reservations about that due to it being a specialized position and having to worry about work capacity. He stated that consultants can be engaged cost-effectively to do grant writing – they have experience, they have contacts in the state, and they will do it professionally. He stated that he is also looking at the position of full-time Forester, and if the City has the capacity for that, or should a consultant be engaged, as in the Grant Writer position.

Mr. Silka advised that the Plan will be on the next meeting for adoption, but said it will be used as a working document to kind of hammer down on specifics.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: December 6, 2022