



Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

Mayor Raymond M. Morriss
Councilman Richard J. "Rock" Cioni
Councilman Eugene T. Frazier
Councilman James L. Furstenberg
Councilwoman Laurie P. Marchini

City Administrator Jeffrey F. Silka
City Solicitor Michael S. Cohen
City Clerk Allison K. Layton

Mayor and City Council of Cumberland

WORK SESSION

City Hall 2nd Floor Conference Room
57 N. Liberty Street
Cumberland, MD 21502

Tuesday, September 19, 2023, 4:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Mayor Raymond M. Morriss; Council Members: Richard Cioni, Eugene Frazier, Jimmy Furstenberg, Laurie Marchini.

ALSO PRESENT: Jeffrey F. Silka, City Administrator; Allison Layton, City Clerk; Michael Cohen, City Solicitor; Ken Tressler, Director of Administrative Services; Chuck Ternent, Chief of Police; Captain Jim Burt, PD Administrative Services; Ashley James, Executive Assistant; Denise Adams, Citizen Services Representative; Kevin Thacker, Code Compliance Manager

Media: Teresa McMinn, Cumberland Times-News
Kathy Cornwell, WCBC Radio

I. POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Chief Ternent provided a PowerPoint presentation, and said that it's been a good year, things are going well. He said the last update provided a strategic plan, with one of the main goals crime reduction. He stated that there has been significant reduction from 2021-2022, with some things trending upwards.

The Chief advised that the second goal was to provide an environment that retains and attracts the highest quality police employees. He stated that they are currently fully staffed, though it may not last long.

Chief Ternent said the third goal was workforce development, and said it's his obligation to prepare all staff and officers for promotions, and said they have sent upper-level management to courses. He said now that things have stabilized, he can start sending more people to training.

The Chief advised that the fourth goal was intelligence and data-driven policing, and stated that they have revamped the intelligence system, it's progressing nicely, but have yet to see results.

Chief Ternent stated that body-worn camera implementation has been accomplished, and said they have just started their third week with everyone equipped except for three officers.

The Chief stated that this has been the busiest year administrative-wise that he can ever remember, with a lot of police gear implementation, new CAD system, and new discipline system. He added that psychological exams as well as physical fitness testing is ongoing.

The Chief mentioned the cannabis law changes, with a lot of unknowns, but said that training and adjusting to policies is ongoing.

In staffing, the Chief stated that within the last 2 years they have had 11 new hires, and said full staffing now includes three officers just back from the academy who are on field training. He stated that besides the three in field training, they are fully staffed with 51 sworn officers.

The Chief talked about the new body-worn cameras, and gave details about how they are worn, and how they work, saying that they auto-activate upon exiting the vehicle, drawing a weapon, or running/jostling, with an "officer down" feature that contacts Dispatch. He added that these cameras also auto-upload and download videos.

Chief Ternent stated that their personnel count is good now, but said they still have vacancies in Narcotics and C3I. He stated that Corporal Cory Beard has submitted his resignation and will be leaving this Friday for a position at the County. He also discussed sustainability in staffing.

The Chief discussed crime statistics, advising that crime is down in almost every category, with property crime creeping up slightly. He added that petty thefts are up, with shopkeepers beginning to report more and prosecute.

The Chief stated that sex offenses are up this year, with some porn-related. He said that across the nation it's trending higher. He also discussed complaints, saying they are at about 22K, which he stated is average.

Chief Ternent provided arrest data, saying that adult arrests are up over last year, as well as juvenile arrests. He added that overdoses have gone up the last few months, but the number the CPD responds to is down due to public programs and NARCAN. He discussed C3I, their cases so far this year, routine monitoring of drugs in the area, and said almost all OD deaths are fentanyl-related.

The Chief provided a vehicle update, saying the fleet has never looked better, with the goal to have a take-home vehicle for every officer, to help with retention. He said the CPD is very appreciative of the fleet for the department.

Chief Ternent talked about being 100% accredited, with updates every year, and discussed grant funding at over \$1M, which is on par with previous years. He discussed police presence at community events, and said bike patrols are up this year. The Chief also talked about Project Connect which partners with community groups and resources to assist with re-entry into the community for those on parole, probation, pretrial release or in drug court.

The Chief advised that the accountability software didn't come to fruition, as the County board decided not to use it. He stated that the department is just 17 cell phones shy of every officer having their own work phone.

The Chief stated that they are working on officer retention, and said the K-9 program needs to be expanded. He advised that in Specialist positions, there has been a big turnover in the last couple years, and said it needs to get up to where it should be.

Chief Ternent stated that they want to implement drones to keep officers safe using covert surveillance. He said grants are in the works, but no success yet. He stated that most time is spent on computers now, with everything having some kind of computer component to it.

In answer to a question from Council regarding retention, the Chief advised that the salary bar was raised all over, and said starting pay for the State is \$88K for some positions, with less workload. He stated that health benefits are better elsewhere, and his officers' workload is high.

The Chief talked about juvenile drug problems, saying it's harder to deal with juveniles now. He advised that anyone under the age of 10, officers can't speak to, and with anyone under 18 they are not allowed to have a custodial interview. He added that once a juvenile attains a lawyer, the CPD cannot even speak to them.

II. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr. Thacker provided a PowerPoint presentation, and gave a brief update of FY23 accomplishments along with a Code Enforcement update. He stated that now there are four full-time code employees, saying they are top-notch staff and a great support system.

Mr. Thacker advised on code cases, saying there were 646 total cases entered, 533 resolved, 113 open, which he stated was on par with last year. He explained that the open cases were due to court delays or rental housing.

Mr. Thacker discussed the two surplus sale rounds, with overall 82 properties sold, two through GovDeals. Mr. Tressler stated that GovDeals is a good vehicle for the City to sell property, and said that previous vehicle sales through them were successful.

Mr. Thacker stated that two properties were sold for rehab this past year, and said only 5 were demolished. He explained that neighborhood revitalization is working and is a good step in the right direction. He mentioned that there are some slated for demolition this year, and pointed out planned properties, foreclosures and donations on the slide.

Mr. Thacker discussed potential property sales, saying there were more lots with rehabs, and said code officers are now looking for more creative ways in dealing with people who cannot take care of their property. He added that they are working with those owners to see if they want to donate the properties to the City.

Ms. Adams advised that the Clean-Up effort in June was a success, with lots of calls regarding the program. He stated that the cost was \$13,116, but said lots of trash was removed from the City. She added that they are already getting calls about when the City will do this program again.

Mr. Thacker discussed the current Nuisance Sweep taking place, and said they came up with the plan starting with all major arteries into the City and then moving into the neighborhoods. He said they began on Centre and Mechanic Streets, with 200 properties visited. He explained 90 had no issues, but 110 did. He also went over Baltimore Avenue and Oldtown Road, and said 80% of the issues on Oldtown Road were sidewalks. He stated that most people are not aware that they are responsible for their property up to the street, which includes maintaining the

sidewalks in every season. He stated, however, that trees are governed by the DNR, which recommends the City Arborist handle those. Mr. Thacker said the streets up next are Greene, Virginia Avenue, Henderson Avenue and Maryland Avenue, weather pending. He explained that after that they will be moving into the neighborhoods, continuing into the Spring of 2024.

Mr. Thacker discussed the prize drawing for folks with no issues on their properties, saying the gift cards come from local businesses. Ms. Adams added that they have gotten calls from those who have gotten recognition for taking care of their property, thanking the City.

Ms. Adams discussed the grant programs – two programs combined to be more flexible in the future – PIP for low-income owner-occupied, and Home Rehab for non-occupied uninhabitable. She added that there is still \$285K remaining in the program through July of 2024.

Mr. Thacker discussed completed PIP projects on Grand Avenue, Walnut and Greene, and discussed the Demolition Assistance Grant, saying they are kicking around the idea of expanding the grant program to assist with demolitions. Mr. Tressler mentioned that NBA Homes wants to make a presentation for building on properties – buying tear-down homes and building new.

Mr. Thacker stated that there has been a lot of interest in the past year in projects in the City, and said they are calling him weekly about projects. He explained that in the past the City has partnered with the County, and said he has been in contact with his counterpart over there, who wants to work on Central Avenue – gateway to the City – and wants to do what he can to help. He explained that the County is open to help fund a clean-up of the Central Avenue area. Mr. Thacker stated that rehabbed properties will be assessed much higher, and said the thought is to offer a sliding scale on taxes. If sold, the developer would get the tax money back.

Mr. Thacker advised that regarding media outreach, there has been a 73% increase in engagement. There was discussion on outreach plans and grants, and Mr. Thacker advised that they are compiling a list of properties they need to start going after.

III. AGENDA REVIEW SEPTEMBER 19, 2023

Mr. Silka reviewed the Orders on the Consent Agenda, providing additional information for several: Order 27,320 rescinds Order 27,308 due to a type-o; Order 27,322, donating 6 office chairs to the Town of Ridgeley; and Order 27,326, authorizing the sole source purchase of a new Fire Engine from Atlantic Emergency Solutions, which provides a place in the production line. The engine will not be ready until 2025.

IV. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATES

Council Member Marchini advised on several meetings and several events coming up:

Leadership Allegany Rising, November 16th

Lakota Group meetings for the HPC strategic plan were well attended

Emmanuel Episcopal Church has purchased the Hoye House, creating a museum

Training for HPC Monday night

Heritage Days went great, good feedback

Neighborhood meeting last week – West Side

Baltimore Street Discount Cards – good through December 2024 - \$5 – see Melinda or Laurie

Winter Festival at Canal Place for 3 dates – November 25, December 2, December 9

First Barathalon – September 30
Clean, Safe and Green – talk about solar panels
Dragons on the Lake this Saturday

Council Member Frazier advised that he attended Community Resource Day at AC, which transports people there for social services, haircuts, etc.

Mayor Morriss stated that the 2nd Annual Bacon Festival went well, and said he and Council Member Furstenberg honored Barb Buehl at the festival. He remarked on the ribbon cutting at Archway Station, and said Heritage Days went well.

Council Member Cioni discussed a letter from Let's Beautify Cumberland regarding extra security cameras, and wants M&CC to take a look at it to how they can help. Mayor Morriss noted that all cameras have been spoken for. Mr. Silka stated they can take a look at it and come back with some costs, saying it would be a separate program and cost than those that were grant funded.

V. ADJOURNMENT

With no further business at hand, the meeting adjourned at 6:17 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Allison K. Layton
City Clerk

Minutes approved on: October 3, 2023