

Minutes
PortClintonCity Council
Emergency Services Committee
Tuesday, July 19th, 2016

Call to Order: 5:30 PM

Moment of silence for the fallen officers from Dallas and Baton Rouge

Roll Call:

Committee Members:

Jerry Tarolli – Chair, Margaret Phillips, Beth Gillman

Emergency Services Personnel:

Fire Chief Kent Johnson, Police Chief Rob Hickman

Community Members:

Vince Leone, Ron Timmons, Bruce Szilagyi, Ron Susana, Mark Anderson, Corbin Carpenter,
Lisa Sarty

Fire Chief Report

Mr. Johnson asked for that the ordinance for the new fire truck be passed at the next Port Clinton Council Meeting. He would like for there to be a pole to make sure that there is enough council present to pass the ordinance at the next meeting. Mrs. Gillman stated that she would have liked to have had it pass at the last meeting and apologized.

Mr. Johnson stated that the paper work has been filed for the fire levy. The committee is still deciding on how they are going to campaign. He stated that to save cost they are probably going to go out and knock on doors. He stated that he does not think that the levy is going to be a problem due to it being a renewal. Mr. Tarolli asked if we received a number yet and Mr. Johnson stated that we should be receiving it around the second week of August. Mr. Tarolli asked if they were going to take advantage of the \$500 funding from the city for mailing; Mr. Johnson stated that they probably will with postage.

Mr. Johnson stated that the run volumes are up and currently it is a record for July. He stated that he received a call from Becky Brooks at the News Messenger; she is doing an article for all of Ottawa County on how difficult is to get members. He stated that we have plenty of volunteers on the waiting list. Mr. Tarolli asked Mr. Johnson if he was still thinking about an ordinance to increase the roster. Mr. Johnson stated that he is still thinking about that and also amending the payroll ordinance to permit a civilian dispatcher and clerk. He would like to get the people that are on the waiting list involved. He stated that he has a couple other things that he is looking into before he writes the ordinance. Mr. Johnson stated that the civil clerk and dispatcher would not be for his benefit but for the next chief that takes his place.

Mr. Johnson stated that they poured the last of the concrete at the memorial last week and that the statue was shipped today. He stated that they made a decision to put in memorial garden with the money that has been received in honor of fallen firefighters. This is a memorial for all first responders not just Port Clinton. There will be a dedication on September 11th, 2016 at 1pm. Ms. Phillips stated that she stopped by to see the memorial and it is beautiful. Mr. Johnson stated that they had a lot of supporters and volunteers to help with the memorial.

Police Chief Report

Mr. Hickman handed out eight attachments regarding centralized dispatching to the committee members to review and then he turned the floor over to Mr. Szilagyi who is president of the local lodge.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that is the president of Port Clinton Lodge 79 and has been a police officer for 35 years. He stated that he wanted to remind everyone of why municipal services were created; they were created because they provided better services to communities. Many years ago several of the services started being provided outside of the city. He stated that he consistently hears from the citizens and tourists that the best thing they like about this town is that they feel safe; they can go for a walk at night and feel safe.

He stated that a lot of people move out of large cities now and into suburbs due to crime. If they slowly lose the feeling of being safe in town what is going to keep them from moving out of town? Mr. Szilagyi stated why does losing our dispatches make this a less safe place to live? He stated that we typically have two officers working the road and one dispatcher. If an officer brings someone in for a DUI, they will bring them into the station and the other officer will stay on the road due to the dispatcher being at the station. The dispatcher then can witness all the paper work and assist with the booking. If the city moves to centralized dispatch the second officer will have to come off the road to assist with the booking and witness all the paperwork; if this happens and another call comes through one of the officers is going to have to stay behind at the station because the prisoner can't be left in the holding cell unattended. He stated that is the real problem with all of this; we don't have six or seven officers working at one time to support this. Mr. Tarolli asked how many road officers does the County have? Mr. Szilagyi stated that they have two to three officers at one time for the whole county so it will take a while for one of them to get to the scene if need be. Mr. Szilagyi stated that they usually have a sergeant, a sheriff and two deputies and they split the county. They usually have an east end deputy, a west end deputy and the sheriff will do the middle. Mrs. Gillman stated that we are the largest county. Mr. Szilagyi stated no offence to the Sheriff department but it could take them up to ten to fifteen minutes to respond.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that there would be nobody at the station to answer the window if someone reports to the station. He stated if the decision was made to go to centralized dispatch, the citizen would have to pick up a phone when at the station and wait for an officer to report there. He referenced that if a citizen reports there that someone is chasing them that no one would be there to make the citizen feel safe.

Mr. Leone asked if this is the first meeting that this has been discussed? Mr. Tarolli stated with council it is but the present Mayor discussed it with the commissioners and Mr. Tarolli went to that meeting. Mr. Leone asked Chief Hickman if he had any in depth conversations with the Mayor prior to this meeting about cost savings or what it meant to the citizens? Chief Hickman stated that yes he had a meeting on May 13, 2016. Mr. Leone stated that he doesn't believe that this topic should not even be coming up right now. He stated that with everything that is going on in this world right now. He stated that we have a great relationship now between the Ottawa County Sheriff Department and the Port Clinton Police Department. He stated that he takes serious offense that this conversation is even happening as a citizen. When are we going to start worrying about the citizens Mr. Leone asked. He stated that not even a couple months ago council was voting on a budget that wanted to add a \$30,000 position for a part time recreation director and it was voted down but now we want to take away the dispatch and risk the lives of everyone in our community. He stated that he appreciated the documents that Chief Hickman provided but the item that is highlighted is a figure that the city would save and that you can't put a price on a human life. Mrs. Gillman stated that we can't really go off of those figures because she believes that there would be a cost from the County. She stated that the numbers provided are more preliminary figures and she believes that they have no impact on the decision. She stated that police are so much more than a numbers game especially with emergency services. Our retirement committee feels so safe and we cannot put a price on it. She stated that this was brought to us to look at. She stated that we don't know how much time we are going to invest into this because we can't even estimate what the County is going to charge us plus if we have to hire two new officers they are not sure of that salary, insurance prices and union negotiations. She stated it is not as easy as saying we are going to trim the budget by this much money and maybe other spots can be trimmed.

Mrs. Gillman said that she appreciated Mr. Szilagyi providing the information about the dispatchers and their current roles. Mr. Szilagyi stated that he is not offended that this discussion

came to this meeting and that he just wanted to make sure that the committee and council had the facts.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that the fact of the matter is if we are not going to provide better services to the citizens of Port Clinton then they might as well move out of the city. He stated that he doesn't mean that disrespectfully but if they are not going to get better services then why live in town and pay the city income tax. He stated that he understands that it is councils job/obligation to look and try to save money but there are certain places that you can't cut.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that the membership strongly supports keeping our dispatch and they urge this committee to recommend not to do away with dispatch. Mr. Szilagyi stated that he is available if anyone has anyone question. Ms. Phillips stated that she had other council members come to her asking why we are discussing this again. She stated that in the long run she does not see this being a cost savings to the city and we need to have some common sense with this. Mr. Tarolli stated that the bottom line is how to you put a cost on someone's life. Mr. Szilagyi stated that is part of it and the other part is service to the citizens that you represent.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that there are some issues with central dispatching and he then introduced Ron Susana he is currently the third district trustee for the Fraternal Order of Police. He had 26 years with the Sandusky Police Department and he is very knowledgeable of how centralized dispatching works in Sandusky. Mr. Susana stated that he went back to work in Sandusky part time in 2012 so he listens to it every day. He stated that in Erie County the Chiefs of Police are not allowed to discuss anything with dispatch; it has to go through the Sheriff. Mr. Susana stated that you will see cost savings in the first 3 years but after that it will not be that way. He stated that we currently have five dispatches and stated that they have no guarantee of a job with the County. He stated that it is not all about the saving the city money; it is about service to the citizens. Mr. Susana stated that if the Chief hears something that he does not like on the radio he can't say anything to the dispatchers. Mr. Szilagyi stated that he knows several officers in Sandusky that do not care for centralized dispatching. Mr. Susana stated that you develop a bond with other officers and dispatch that you will not have with central. Mr. Tarolli asked if there was a difference with how the City dispatch and officers talk to each other verses how the County dispatchers talk. Chief Hickman stated that back when he was a Sargent on nights he wrote a couple County dispatchers up because they didn't like up using their channels so they would key over me just so I couldn't talk on their radio. Mr. Szilagyi stated that they work closely with the dispatchers currently to get them find tuned. Mr. Carpenter stated that the officers on the street here will be on a different radio frequency that the County will not monitor. With that being said, we will have officers doing things and talking to each other that the County will not even know about.

Mr. Leone stated that making cuts is not the answer and that we should be looking creative ways to bring dollars in. Mr. Leone stated that we have lost so many opportunities with the services that we have let go out of this town. Mrs. Gillman stated that she would wonder where this originated because it is combining with the County, which she would think would come from the Chief that would say we are strapped and need to combine these services. Chief Hickman stated that he came to this meeting wanting to remain neutral. He stated Mr. Leone brought it up that I had a meeting with Mayor Wheeler about going to a meeting with Sheriff Levorchick; we discussed why I thought it was a bad idea in my opinion and the meeting lasted approximately 30 minutes. At that time Mayor Wheeler asked Chief Hickman to cancel that and he wasn't going to have the meeting. Mrs. Gillman stated to Chief Hickman that this didn't originate because of a need for you to cut in your department and Chief Hickman stated no. Chief Hickman stated that he has had to defend this topic twice; once under Mayor Tester and once under Mayor Leone. Chief Hickman stated that he has had several conversations with Mr. Hatfield in regards to the Police Department budget. Mr. Anderson stated that every new administration when the budget is reviewed they see the big number and automatically look at how they can cut the big number.

Chief Johnson stated he has been Chief under four mayors and all have mentioned centralized dispatching at one point. He stated that he is not a fan of centralized dispatching; however, everything has to be looked at and he can respect anyone who looks anything in respect to numbers. Chief Johnson stated that centralized dispatching would have a major effect on him. He

stated that the Port Clinton Police Department does for the Fire Department that he can guarantee that the County does not. He stated that a lot of people don't realize he but all the fire tones come from the Ottawa County Sheriff Department and he still relies on the Police Department to carry the call for the first four minutes of the call. When the County calls in with the call and they talk to someone they drop from the call and at that time the Police Department dispatcher covers the call until the Fire Department dispatcher gets in the office. Chief Johnson stated that personal touch of someone in the lobby is priceless. Chief Johnson stated that he is glad that it has finally come this far; get it out and finally start discussing it openly. He stated that it needs to go this far so we can stop talking about this in the future and start coming up with a real plan. Chief Johnson stated that we have a great safety team. He stated that we are hand and hand in the mess. What he asked of the committee members and council to do your research. Mr. Anderson stated that we are on required to average 30,000 calls for the year to the Police Station. Mrs. Gillman asked the group if this is something that administration pursued or if the County approached us. Chief Hickman stated that administration approached the County.

Mr. Leone brought up what the carry-over was from the previous administration. He stated that there was enough money to give everyone a raise in the budget and maybe those dollars should be looked at. Mrs. Gillman stated that she doesn't know if the County does want these additional calls dropped on them. Mr. Carpenter stated that he attended the meeting that was held with the Mayor and the commissioners and he requested a recording as a citizen and he is willing to share it. Ms. Phillips stated that Mr. Tarolli is the one that asked to have this discussion added to the agenda.

Mr. Szilagyi stated that there is a lot of times where the Police Department backs up the Ottawa County Sheriff.

Mr. Holman stated the County has taken engineering out of the city and that they can also take out dispatch. He also stated that he likes the traffic light that is flashing at Jefferson and Fourth. Chief Hickman stated that the controller is broken and a new one is coming.

Mr. Carpenter stated that he came in regular clothes tonight so he could be recognized that he is also a Port Clinton Citizen. He then recited a paragraph from a letter that was distributed to all law enforcement from President Barak Obama.

"As you continue to serve us in this tumultuous hour, we again recognize that we can no longer ask you to solve issues we refuse to address as a society. We should give you the resources you need to do your job, including our full-throated support. We must give you the tools you need to build and strengthen the bonds of trust with those you serve, and our best efforts to address the underlying challenges that contribute to crime and unrest."

Mr. Carpenter says that he takes that as over the years obviously we have been given restraints and we have been asked to more for less. He believes that the President is realizing the fault in that. He is asking the committee to realize the fault in that as well and don't ask us to more with less and jeopardize the citizens.

Ms. Phillips motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mrs. Gillman. The meeting was adjourned at 6:36pm.