MINUTES
City Council Public Safety Committee

Monday, January 22, 2024 – 3:30 PM
City Hall Council Chambers

Members Present:	Aaron Baker, Chair, Council Member Mac Morrow, Vice-Chair, Council Member Kevin Gallo, Citizen Member Mayor Mauren Copelof, Ex-Officio Member
Staff Present	Wilson Hooper, City Manager Tom Jordan, Police Chief Bobby Cooper, Fire Chief Alex Shepherd, Assistant to the City Manager Becky McCann, Communications Coordinator Danny Godman, Cmdr. of Investigations Aaron Thompson, Cmdr. of Patrol Operations
Guests:	Nicole Bentley, Linda Gallo, Monica Driscoll, Morris Jenkins, Rachell Hall, Billy Parrish

A. Welcome & Call to Order

Committee Chair Aaron Baker welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 3:37 PM.

B. Certification of Quorum

Assistant to the City Manager Alex Shepherd certified that a quorum was present.

C. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Mr. Morrow, to add a section E. Public Comment, the motion was seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

D. Minutes from November 27, 2023 Meeting

Motion by Mr. Morrow, seconded by Mr. Gallo to approve the minutes from the November 27, 2023 meeting as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Public Comment

Ms. Hall expressed appreciation for the committee's attention to the traffic and safety issues on Probart St. She commended Mr. Hooper for his support and thoroughness in addressing the concerns raised by Mr. Gallo. Ms. Hall looks forward to seeing further progress, including the stakeholder meeting on February 12th and attending the City Council meeting on February 26th.She said she witness another incident because one of the large dump trucks caused a car to jump the curve to avoid a collision.

Mr. Jenkins added that he has observed a significant number of vehicles crossing the double yellow line and exceeding the speed limit on Probart St.

F. Update on Transportation Working Group

Mr. Hooper informed the committee that we have scheduled a public stakeholder meeting on Monday, February 12th. You should start to see public advertising for this event soon. He said we are still working with our consultants on how the event will work. The feedback from this event will be brought back to the committee, and then the committee can recommend solutions to City Council. Then it will be up to City Council to decide if it gets funded in the next fiscal year. The Wilson St./Main St./Greenville Hwy intersection reconfiguration will also follow the same process for funding deliberations.

Mr. Baker asked if there are documented incidents that have occurred at that intersection.

Mr. Hooper said at our last Transportation Working Group meeting, we were able to see the pedestrian count that NCDOT had completed. The NCDOT count showed that pedestrian numbers are high because it is used to drop kids off at school. He said that at Ecusta Rd., we did find that speeds and volumes there are high according to our data. Mr. Hooper said that because the data was so much higher than what the State had collected a year ago, they thought our data was wrong. So, we will keep our counters there to collect more data. If our numbers prove to be correct, then our consultant tells us that the road will move up the list in terms of installing safety measures. However, we will inform the State that they should go ahead and install safety measures because once the County starts to build their courthouse, volumes and speeds are going to increase.

Mr. Cooper said that there has been a fatality on that road already.

Mr. Baker mentioned that before the new courthouse is built, there will be a new EMS station there.

Mr. Gallo asked if there would be a signal at the new EMS station intersection to automatically stop traffic for the EMS vehicles.

Mr. Cooper mentioned the old EMS station signal did not function properly.

Mr. Gallo asked if the stop signs at Silversteen Park are budgeted. He did say that it looks like they will be installed very shortly.

Mr. Hooper said the good news about stop signs is that they are about $200 each and are very affordable.

Mr. Gallo said at the stakeholders' meeting, if everything is approved, then stop signs and painting on the road and some other signs may be within the budget. He asked if the speed cushion would be the large item to negotiate for approval by Council.

Mr. Hooper said yes it will need to be approved by Council.

Mr. Baker asked what the path is forward for revising the cumbersome City Traffic Calming Policy.

Mr. Hooper said at some point I will come to this committee and ask for your opinion on what the right balance is for data-based decision-making and public input, and then revise the policy based on that feedback.

Mr. Gallo shared that one of the residents pointed out that right now in the policy it states if letters or some other way of polling the residents is conducted, then no response is considered a no vote. Which, to me, is unrepresentative of the responses.

G. Downtown Residential Parking Permits Discussion

Mr. Jordan said this item came up when Council Member Jones was in office, but we were trying to perform research on it. Today, I wanted to bring a couple of questions to the committee, like what if you're a resident downtown.

Ms. Bentley said there are around twenty units downtown, and about half of those are full-time residents, while the other units are used for vacation rentals.

Mr. Jordan said when speaking to a resident who lives near Bracken Mountain Bakery, she will park her car behind City Hall and then bring groceries to her unit, which is a far distance. Mr. Jordan asked what is the specific area that we will look at for residential parking, which units would be able to receive the passes, and how many passes would be given out per unit.

Mayor Copelof mentioned that one individual reached out to her about a parking pass and said that they would be willing to pay a fee if they could park in one of our lots because we do not allow for overnight parking.

Mr. Jordan said we do have employee parking permits, so it would be feasible to provide parking permits to residents. He said we would need to ask our City Attorney about liability concerns.

Mr. Baker said isn't our on-street parking 2-hour parking.

Mr. Jordan replied yes, from 9 am to 6 pm.

Mr. Baker continued have we looked at what other municipalities are doing in our area.

Mr. Jordan responded yes, I have looked at examples from Virginia.

Mr. Gallo mentioned that it seemed the City parking available is strategically placed around the downtown region, so maybe the monthly pass might be an option for long-term residents. As for the short-term Airbnb folks, aren't Airbnb's required to have a certain number of spaces provided.

Mr. Morrow said they are supposed to have two.

Mr. Baker said places above Quixote have their own private parking, correct.

Ms. Bentley said yes, a lot of them have parking tied to their unit.

Mr. Baker asked if we did the monthly parking pass, would it be on the street or in a paid lot.

Mr. Jordan said I think it would be in a paid lot.

Mr. Baker suggested we may need to do a public campaign on on-street parking because if there is not a sign posted, then it's legal.

H. Quarterly Pedestrian Report

Mr. Hooper presented the pedestrian, bicycle, and motorcycle crash data that we respond to. He said if someone does not report an incident, then it does not show on the report.

Mr. Baker asked do we also have location data tied to the report.

Mr. Jordan explained that every traffic collision that is reported, meaning damage over a certain amount or injuries, then it goes into the State database.

I. Police Department Annual Report

Mr. Jordan presented the Police Department Annual Report. He said that from our staffing perspective, 2023 was a difficult year because we were down around six positions. When looking at our crime rates for 2023, they mirror our 2020 numbers before COVID. Our numbers are still trending on the lower end from 2014 to the present. Overall, our crime is relatively low, and Brevard is a very safe place to live. Our calls for service in 2023 dropped. A call for service is not just when you call us, but it's also when an officer initiates a traffic stop or checks a suspicious individual. In 2023, we had twenty-five total incidents of use of force. Also, in 2023, we were down six positions, which is around a quarter of our workforce. With help from the City Manager, we started the cadet program, which pays the police officer during their training, whereas before it was unpaid. In the future, we are working towards becoming an accredited law enforcement agency. We are also working towards upgrading our parking enforcement system and are still waiting on all the equipment to be delivered. It has taken a while to receive everything.

Mr. Baker said I know that some of those third-party companies charge fees. He asked if we are currently paying them for this service.

Mr. Jordan said that the customers pay any fees charged by the third-party company and they are not charged to the city. He said the only expense we had was the initial purchase of the parking ticket equipment.

Mr. Morrow said at last month's RPO meeting, they announced that there is someone at Silvermont for safe routes to school.

J. Fire Department Annual Report

Mr. Cooper presented the Fire Department Annual Report. He said we took over medical response in August of 2022, and we have seen our numbers increase considerably over the years. We do anticipate those numbers to even out. He said we are projecting incidents to increase in 2024 and 2025. Mr. Cooper said that the calls are spread out over all days of the week consistently and that the middle of the afternoon is our busiest time. He mentioned that due to the increase in calls, our mileage has increased on our apparatuses and that it may have an impact on our replacement schedule. He also mentioned that the current wait time for a new fire engine is three plus years.

Mr. Morrow asked when we would renegotiate the agreement between the County and City.

Mr. Cooper said that it automatically renews every year, and we renewed it in August 2022.

Mr. Baker asked if we track where we are requesting mutual aid.

Mr. Cooper said we do, and it fluctuates a lot with structure fires.

Additional Comments:

Mr. Morrow asked about the light crossing at Whitmire.

Mr. Hooper said that our consultants confirmed that it is a weird intersection according to standards. He said they will come out and analyze possible solutions. He said we took possession of 132 Commerce St. and we are looking into making it our long term home of the Police Department.

K. Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Public Safety Committee will be on Monday, February 26, 2024 at 3:30 pm at City Hall.

L. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:01 PM.

Minutes Approved: April 2, 2024

X _____
Aaron Baker,
Chair. Council Member

X _____
Alex Shepherd,
Assistant to the City Manager