

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY, HEALTH & TRAFFIC

October 5, 2021 at 5:00 PM

Chairman Barry called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Barry, Stewart, Long, Gamache, Terrio

Messrs.: A. Parent, R. Cashin, M. Lamothe, M. Donahue

1. Presentation by the Fire Department on the Squad 1 Community Response Unit.

Andre Parent, Fire Chief, stated we are here tonight at the request of Alderman O'Neil. He wanted a presentation of the Squad Unit that we rolled out last month. Deputy Chief Cashin will go over the handout.

Ryan Cashin, Deputy Fire Chief, stated I would like to start with the idea of this squad. The idea started in 2019 in order to bring down the low acuity medical calls and to help out with Safe Station. The amount of low acuity medical calls in the center city is very large; we have a lot of them. The idea was we could put two guys in a car and it would bring down the number of resources we needed for every medical call. COVID hit and changed the directory of the squad quite a bit. That is when it got more into the homeless outreach. The homeless were told to stay in the camps and we had to go out and treat any kind of medical illness or service they were in need of. For a year or so it transitioned into that but now we are trying to transition back to the initial goal of what this squad was. This was to utilize it for low acuity medical calls, various other low medical calls and to help with other calls such as command resources. The squad is currently the busiest unit in the city in the hours that it is operational. It averages about seven calls in a short span. It shows you the number of low acuity calls that we have identified to bring it in. We recently started, on Monday's, bringing a member of Greater Manchester Mental Health with us to help address some of those outreach issues we have identified and to

continue those relationships with those partners. The squad has been a huge success thus far. We have had nothing but positive feedback from it. The members have been very happy with it. Everyone we have spoken to has been very happy with it and we are continually addressing it. As you will see in your packet, we have short term and long term goals for the squad moving forward through the winter. It is currently funded through the State of NH. It was initially funded through a grant and is now in the bi-annual budget. How that goes moving forward we will have to see. I'd really like to open it up to you guys if you have questions, concerns and or comments. Let's start a conversation about this.

Alderman Long stated it appears we are working back to what the norm was. I get the outreach through the Fire Department although some things aren't Fire Department stuff. I absolutely appreciate what you have done beyond and above what you were hired to do. It has been two years. Is it a fiscal year? I am trying to think of what year we would need to add this to our budget.

Chief Parent replied this is fiscal year. We have already expended half the money last year and will be working on the final \$255,000 for this fiscal year.

Alderman Long asked so in FY23 we need to look for how much.

Chief Parent replied right now we have it projected out to be \$255,000 per year.

Alderman Long asked does that includes operations.

Chief Parent replied yes; operations, fuel and all of that.

Alderman Long asked so you will include all that in your budget.

Chief Parent replied we will try to get the state to extend it. If not, we will come to the Board and ask for additional funding.

Chairman Barry asked are there was any grant, state, or federal money out there that is available for this type of work.

Chief Parent replied initially it was grant money and has now been placed into the state budget through the Department of Health and Human Services. We are guaranteed that money for this year and we are going to have to see if they will fund it going forward.

Chairman Barry stated that is what I meant. In the future are there any other opportunities other than getting it directly from the city to assist in anyway? Currently we have all that funding like ARPA. Could any that funding be used for this? My understanding is that ARPA funding is five years. Is that something we could use for this operation?

Chief Parent stated I believe it is but none of that money has been allocated to us.

Chairman Barry replied that is something we can present. Even though we have already designated money to certain things, we can always go back and say we need it here if things are not working out.

Alderman Terrio stated I have three questions. How were we handling these medical calls before this unit?

Chief Parent replied it was based on the severity of the call. We would normally send an engine company and an ambulance and often times just an ambulance. Now with low acuity calls we will just send the squad. They will check out the patient and if they need transport they will call the ambulance so we aren't always using these vital resources.

Alderman Terrio replied nice. That leads to my next question. How are you triaging someone having stomach pain vs. sleep, heart attack vs. dead? How are you triaging to know if you need an ambulance or to send this unit?

Chief Parent replied the squad is basically centralized within the inner city. If the dispatch goes out ambulance and engine company, the squad usually gets on scene first. If they don't need those resources, they can cancel so nobody is held up on scene.

Alderman Terrio replied excellent. My last question is concerning the expense. Did we hire extra personnel or buy extra vehicles? I am just wondering where the money is going.

Chief Parent replied the money is at the detail rate. We did not hire additional people. It is like a cop detail at a traffic job.

Alderman Terrio stated so it's like overtime, extra hours that are regular staff. A possible money saving thing would be to hire extra staff?

Chief Parent replied I'd like to hire more staff in the future yes.

Alderman Stewart stated I was wondering if you might give us some examples of what low acuity calls are as I am not familiar with that term.

Chief Parent replied things like grandma fell out of bed, intoxicated persons, possible overdose which often are given Narcan before we even get there. Those are the kind of calls. Sometimes when we call a code 10 (dead on arrival), we have to keep someone on scene until the police get there.

Chairman Barry stated I have a follow-up on what Alderman Terrio brought up. Right now you guys are manning with details correct? Only details and no regular work?

Chief Parent answered no it is not regular work, only detail.

Chairman Barry stated after that funding is gone it would be pretty difficult to continue that with the city budget when you're spending \$60, \$70, \$80 an hour. Do you know what your rate is?

Chief Parent replied it is \$60 an hour.

Chairman Barry stated \$60 an hour goes quick.

Chief Parent replied right. I couldn't absorb that in my budget.

Chairman Barry stated I think it is important, like Alderman Terrio suggested, that if you need more manpower let's try to get it. We have a new budget coming up next year. Sounds like you need more manpower, especially for something like this which we certainly need. I don't think it is something we could afford at the detail rate.

Alderman O'Neil asked Chief could you clarify that you have enough funding through the current fiscal year. So it would be July of 2023 you would not have funding?

Chief Parent replied that is correct.

Alderman O'Neil stated I agree with Alderman Barry's statement that maybe we should be looking at the ARPA funds as there is a pretty big portion in there regarding community health. As Alderman Barry stated it is a living breathing document that we can make changes to as we see needed. I don't know how you measure this but not sending a firetruck has some value. It has costs of firefighters, fuel, wear and tear on the truck. I think at one time we tried to figure this out but could never come up with a number. My opinion is that this significantly saves resources at the Fire Department.

Chief Parent stated we have thought about it but haven't figured out a way to quantify that.

Alderman O'Neil replied I don't know how to do that either. What is the time period for the bar graph 6:8 meaning when are you measuring that, what month to what month?

Mr. Cashin replied the bar graph goes from January 1st 2021 to when we pulled this data on September 22. This is per hour medical calls that were dispatched through our 911 system. What we found is that historically this peak, based on data we pulled from AMR and those discussions, is pretty steady throughout the year. That is how we identified the time to put it in. So 9-10 PM the call volume in the city starts going up and runs through 11 PM.

Alderman O'Neil stated I might have meant the one on the page before that one; the one that broke it down in different categories. The sixth up from the bottom, is that motor vehicles accidents?

Mr. Cashin replied yes, MVC is motor vehicle crash.

Alderman O'Neil stated I've seen them working some one-way streets at some pretty serious motor vehicle accidents.

Mr. Cashin replied they have the ability to self-dispatch from the unit if they are out and come across a situation. They will then self-dispatch themselves to that call. The big positive about this resource is that it's out in the downtown area and not stationed in one spot. It is constantly moving in that smaller area where we are really trying to identify that high call volume. They do come across a good amount of emergencies that they will self-dispatch to. The members have done a fantastic job in triaging those.

Alderman O'Neil asked was there any thought, and again money drives these programs, but do you think the weekend fits into similar data on number of calls? Do you see a significant drop in calls for service on the weekends?

Mr. Cashin replied Saturday keeps with the trend a little bit and Sunday drops a little bit while slightly keeping with the trend. Right now we just don't have the financial resources to run it seven days a week. Ideally we would run a second shift.

Alderman O'Neil stated this is a compliment for you three guys in implementing this. I think it is exciting for the fire service; well done.

Chairman Barry stated I have just one last question on your call volume. The third highest one is the Safe Station. Since we are doing away with that, can we pretty much wipe that out?

Chief Parent replied yes for the most part. We will still have stragglers coming in so we will still have an opioid component out there. For the most part, this money is directed around opioids and to take the stress out of the stations for Safe Station. We still have to keep that component in there but for the most part Safe Station will fall by the wayside.

Alderman O'Neil stated I saw somewhere in here you mentioned about the tracking software for calls. I am just wondering when you get out on a call and it's for an overdose or something like that, does this system allow you to correct that it wasn't just a man down and that it was an overdose or...I thought I read something about software in here?

Mathew Lamothe, Assistant Fire Chief, replied yes we do that now with all calls.

Alderman O'Neil stated it hasn't always been that way correct.

Mr. Lamothe replied as far as I know it has.

Chief Parent stated when we do the firehouse reports, often times its designated with the actual call. It may come in as unconscious but the way that fire housing calls go it would be labeled as cardiac arrest and be accurate.

Alderman Long stated the largest volume is outreach, is that homeless outreach.

Chief Parent replied its homeless outreach, community outreach and stuff like that.

Alderman Long asked is it in encampments only.

Chief Parent replied no. It is going into the parks, rail trails, encampment...

Alderman Long interjected is it for medical only.

Chief Parent replied it is checking conditions and stuff like that.

Alderman Long stated hopefully we can use that \$13.5 million Alderman O'Neil spoke about in Health. Medical I can see, mental health I'm not sure why.

2. The Traffic Division has submitted an agenda which needs to be addressed:

RIGHT TURN ONLY

On Frederick Street at Second Street

Alderman Barry

COMMERCIAL MOTOR VEHICLES PROHIBITED

On Garlact Avenue between Lake Shore Road and Hartt Avenue

Alderman Sharonov

On motion by Alderman Gamache, duly seconded by Alderman Long, it was voted to approve.

3. Special events update from the Police Department, if available.

Michael Donahue, Police Sergeant, stated being in the Traffic Unit we deal with complaints of various issues. Every school year develops new issues as there are new parents. However, the traffic patterns surrounding the schools have always remained the same. The complaints that we receive seem to be the same year in year out whether is an abutting neighbor, parking issues, or a parent and safety issues. We have gone to each school on numerous days and watched the traffic patterns to see what we could do with manpower and directing or what needs to be changed in order to make it better for different schools. We have done some of the south end but the two schools I gave you today are the on the west side - Parker Varney and Northwest. We would like to try these changes on a temporary basis to see if they actually alleviate the stress and help make it safer for the kids. At Parker Varney school, we met with the principals and SAU personnel. We have gone over this extensively and we believe this plan will help some of these issues. It does require some blocking of roads and changing of some traffic. If we look at Parker Varney and go down to drop off and pick up times, Summerside Avenue get backed up all the way down to Milford Street. If anybody ever deals with the west side, there we have a traffic guard at Milford and Summerside. That traffic guard is there for students, however, if we can direct traffic at that location and empty onto Milford it would significantly reduce the backup that goes all the way up Summerside and into Lewis Street where the school actually sits. Second to that, at the top of Summerside where it turns into Lewis Street there is a parking lot the school owns that abuts Lewis Street. It has two giant Do Not Enter signs but there is no curb that separates the two. You can actually drive from Lewis street directly into this lot. Parker Varney School has plenty of parking in the back that is not being utilized. It only holds about 25%. If they post that to No Parking and use temporary poles to create a horseshoe, traffic can come up Summerside onto Lewis Street and pull directly into that lot that is now vacant and drive right into where there is a traffic guard and where the kids are and have no issues. The busses would have the same benefit. It would be manned by someone at the school to direct the parents where to drop off and pick up. Secondary to

that we are asking to put a barricade at the top of James A. Pollock Street at Lewis Street. Essentially that would create a one-way for James A. Pollock for opening and closing only - an hour on each end. That would be a northbound traffic pattern where parents would be coming off of Allen Street onto James A. Pollock and heading up the hill towards Parker Varney. Right now, it is two-way traffic with no stop. Parents drop off on the opposite side of the road on the opposite curb from the school then the young kids have to cross two lanes of traffic to get to the sidewalk. If we block that and get the turnaround in the parking lot, it alleviates that two-way traffic allowing parents to drop off the kids on the school side to be received by school personnel. I think if we do that we will significantly reduce the Summerside traffic and it will be much safer. That is the nuts and bolts of the Parker Varney plan.

Chairman Barry asked have you been working with school personnel.

Mr. Donahue replied yes with the principal.

Chairman Barry asked and they are in favor of it.

Mr. Donahue replied very much so.

Alderman Long asked has Public Works, specifically Ms. Clarke, reviewed this.

Mr. Donahue replied she has and there is no issue if approved today.

Alderman Long asked what kind of time-frame are you looking at to test this.

Mr. Donahue replied we would test it in the morning of drop off. The hours are spelled out in the proposal I gave to you regarding when we would put the barricades up. The barricade would be put up temporarily by school personnel and removed by school personnel both morning and evening.

Alderman Long stated I heard you wanted to test this out. How long will that last?

Mr. Donahue replied we were thinking of a month to see if it is successful and then we will report our findings.

Alderman Terrio stated I appreciate your effort. I will support this but there are some things to consider that you are probably already aware of. I live on South Cypress Street near Hallsville, Jewett, and Southside. My kids went to Jewett, Southside and Memorial. There are no parking signs at any of those schools with limited parking. What I found was if there was nobody there to enforce it...because I know when I was on the school board parents would ignore the no parking signs, the one-way signs, and some of them would be very mean to school staffing when they would tell them otherwise. It seemed to be most effective at Southside because there was an SRO there all the time. When they see an officer in uniform they then respect the law and move on. Have you considered, I mean you are in this department so you know this has been happening but what are your thoughts on that.

Mr. Donahue replied the situation with Parker Varney is slightly different in that there is no parking on the streets we are looking to change. There are also no abutting neighbors on James A. Pollock. In this situation for this specific implementation, the Traffic Division will be out there to enforce it to see that it works the way we proposed it. We want to see if that change of behavior alleviates the stresses they are dealing with now.

Chairman Barry stated we have only three minutes so we gotta..

Alderman O'Neil stated really quick, I just spoke to Assistant Chief Mangone about this guy on Wilson Street. I was talking to him about something else, but the issue Alderman Terrio brought up, the disrespect for crossing guards...I got a call today that there was a handicap bus with its lights on and parents and others decided they were going to pass it.

Let us know what we can do to help. I know you guys are trying to make a difference. Weston does something similar to this as I'm out on Hanover Street a lot. The custodian puts out signs or something like that and it seems to work. I applaud your efforts and as far as I am concerned, there should be zero tolerance for those that don't comply.

Chairman Barry stated I guess we could make a motion to temporarily approve this for about a month or so.

Mr. Donahue replied yes we were thinking about a month to see both sides.

Chairman Barry asked when would this start.

Mr. Donahue replied as soon as we get approval from you and the clearing from the city engineers, we can make these changes.

Chairman Barry stated I did notice that there is no impact on the residents.

Alderman Long stated can we move to approve and if they need changes we can do that later.

*On motion by **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Terrio**, it was voted to temporarily approve both traffic proposals.*

Alderman Long asked if will this go to the board tonight.

Mathew Normand, City Clerk, stated we just got this tonight so it will not be on the agenda. There is no provision to report it tonight.

Alderman Terrio asked could we ask to suspend the rules.

City Clerk Normand replied yes we can do that but there is no provision for reporting it.

Chairman Barry stated we don't meet for another two weeks.

Mr. Donahue stated its okay. The faster we get the approval the faster we will enact it.

City Clerk Normand stated one of the Alderman can bring it up under new business tonight.

*There being no further business, on motion by **Alderman Long**, duly seconded by **Alderman Gamache**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

City Clerk